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# Ulster, the land war and the Land Law (Ireland) Act, 1881 /

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ULSTER, THE LAND WAR AND THE  
LAND LAW (IRELAND) ACT, 1881

BY

ALAN STEPHEN HUNT

A Thesis

Presented to the Graduate Committee  
of Lehigh University  
In Candidacy for the Degree of  
Master of Arts  
in  
History

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This thesis is accepted and approved in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

14 December 1987

9. 11. 87

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Alan Hunt. London. October 1987.

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## ABSTRACT

The first episode of the Irish Land War has been documented many times by historians. Yet attention has too often been focused on the Land League, the Nationalist party and Gladstone and little has been written on the course of the Land War in the province of Ulster, where the Nationalist Party and the Land League were weaker than in the south and west of the country. The contribution of northern tenant farmers and of the province's political representatives toward the winning of the revolutionary Land Act of 1881 has generally been overlooked, while Ulster Conservatives have sometimes been ascribed a reactionary role in accounts of the events.

Based on parliamentary papers, Hansard, the Gladstone papers, contemporary publications and newspaper material, this thesis argues that the course of the Land War in Ulster was fundamentally similar to that which it took in the other provinces of Ireland. During the years 1879-81 traditional patterns of political and social deference broke down in precisely the same ways as occurred in the south, and there is no evidence to suggest that religious or even 'national' loyalties prevented the northern Protestant tenantry from pursuing the class war that lay at the bottom of the struggle for land reform.

Ulster's Liberal M.P.s were early and outspoken supporters of the 'three Fs', and in many respects the land program which they espoused was identical to that of the Nationalists. During 1880-1 they kept up unrelenting pressure on Gladstone and were instrumental in persuading him to adopt a radical plan of land reform. Far from opposing the Land Bill, the Ulster Conservatives were its primary advocates on the opposition benches at Westminster. By causing their party colleagues to be more fearful of the consequences of rejecting it they were fundamentally responsible for the safe passage of the Land Bill through both Houses of Parliament.



## INTRODUCTION

In the late nineteenth century, Irish tenant farmers rebelled against their landlords and the executive organs of English government in Ireland in an attempt to force reform of the land system. Initially, the farmers sought to reduce rents and prevent evictions but as they and their representatives became more politically sophisticated they came to demand the wholesale abolition of the landlord system and the transfer of the ownership of land to its occupiers. The agitation, popularly known as the 'Land War', raged on and off for half a century, peaking in the years 1879-1882 and 1898-1902. Of the two periods, the earlier was the more tumultuous and eventful. During these years rural Irishmen were mobilised on an unprecedented scale by a large political organisation known as the Land League which was organised and led by a coalition of progressive Fenians and members of the radical wing of the Home Rule party.

The unrest among the Irish tenantry prompted extensive legislation at Westminster. Gladstone's Irish Land Act of 1881 granted the widespread demand for the 'three Fs' - fair rents, free sale\*, and fixity of tenure - and the Irish Land Purchase Act of 1903, enacted by

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\* Of the value of tenants' unexhausted improvements to the land upon the cessation of their tenancy.

the Conservatives, compelled landlords to sell farms to their tenants and provided loans on attractive terms to facilitate the transition. Both these Acts constituted an unprecedented degree of government interference with private property and as such had implications of far greater scope than the problem to which they were directed. Although on each occasion the legislation was passed by English governments which enjoyed full majorities in the House of Commons, the Nationalist party played a prominent and colorful role in the proceedings, using unorthodox and provocative means in the House and exercising shrewd control of the extra-parliamentary agitation. It was through its association with the land reform issue that the party mobilised popular support among Irish Catholics for its wider nationalist aims.

The first phase of the Land War, with which this thesis is concerned, has been frequently documented by historians. Michael Davitt, the founder of the Land League, set the tone for much of the earlier work in The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland (Dublin, 1904).<sup>1</sup> The studies of N. D. Palmer and J. E. Pomfret are written from similar nationalist perspectives and, along with other failings, greatly understate the credit due to W. E. Forster, the Irish Secretary, and other Liberals in the government for their role in shaping the Land Act of 1881.<sup>2</sup> Modern writers of the 'nationalist' school, which tends to stress the Anglo-Irish dimension of the conflict and to sympathise with Parnell and the Land League, include A. O'Day and J. Lee.<sup>3</sup> Other historians, including P. Bew and S. Clark,<sup>4</sup> have placed much greater emphasis on the class aspects of the Land War

though even they, if more objective in their approach, write almost exclusively on events in the staunchly nationalist areas of Ireland. Two important contributions on the subject which take a broader all-Ireland approach, include T. W. Moody's biography of Davitt and B. Solow's work on the late nineteenth century rural Irish economy.<sup>5</sup>

Thus the prominence of Parnell and the Land League in the agitation of the early 1880s has tended to obscure the contribution to land reform afforded by Ulster, where the Land League and the Nationalist party were weaker than in the southern and western areas of Ireland. The role of the province's Liberal M.Ps. in the winning of the Land Act has generally been ignored by historians, while the Ulster Conservatives have been described as "determined to keep the Tory party up to the mark in defending the landlord interest" and "quick to denounce any weakening of the opposition [to the Land Bill]."<sup>6</sup> Similarly, the substantial, if belated, participation in the Land League of northern Protestant farmers has often been overlooked, while Davitt characterised them as "the militia of the Irish Tories".<sup>7</sup>

In so far as historians of the 'nationalist' school have examined Ulster's role in the Land War, two broad interpretations are apparent. The first alleges that northern farmers enjoyed superior economic conditions arising from the benefits accorded to them by the 'Ulster tenant Custom'. This, it is argued, combined with the subjugation of class differences to the common religious bond shared by many landlords and tenants led to northern indifference to the struggle for

land reform. The failure of the Land League to make headway in the province, at least until late 1880, and the far lower incidence and severity of agrarian crime are seen as symptomatic of this quiescence. The second school of thought stresses the opposition among elements in Ulster to land reform and paints a largely reactionary picture of the province's role in the Land War. The alleged opposition of Ulster's Conservative M.Ps. to land reform, the hostility of Orangemen to the Nationalists, and the existence of strong and rapacious anti-Land League organisations in the north have all been cited as examples of Ulster's resistance to the issue.

Recent scholarship has challenged some of these precepts and has begun to provide the basis for the re-writing of the history of the Land War in a less nationalist hue. B. M. Walker has argued that the land question facilitated a greater degree of interdenominational co-operation in the province than there had ever been before,<sup>8</sup> while R. W. Kirkpatrick's work on the Land War in mid-Ulster has shown the considerable involvement of sectors of the Ulster tenantry in the agitation.<sup>9</sup> The influence of Ulster's political representatives on Gladstone and Forster and on the format of the Irish Land Bill of 1881 has been explored by F. Thompson, though the subject remains unexhausted.<sup>10</sup>

The purpose of this thesis is to show that aspects of the traditional view are in need of revision. Based on parliamentary papers, Hansard, the Gladstone papers, contemporary publications and

newspaper material, it explores the evolution of the land question as a major political issue in Ulster during 1880-1881. Particular emphasis is placed on the development of the stance taken by the province's political representatives. Chapter One examines the economic background to the agitation and compares the circumstances of Ulster farmers to those in the south. In Chapter Two, the political background and the influence of the land question on the general election of 1880 is assessed. Chapter Three describes developments in parliament during the session of 1880 and traces the spread and impact of the Land League in Ulster during the fall. In Chapter Four, the conversion of Gladstone and the Ulster Conservatives to the platform of the 'three Fs' is examined. Chapter Five assesses the influence of Ulster's M.Ps. on the Land Bill of 1881 and makes some observations on the reception and impact of the Act in the province. The final chapter draws a few brief conclusions.

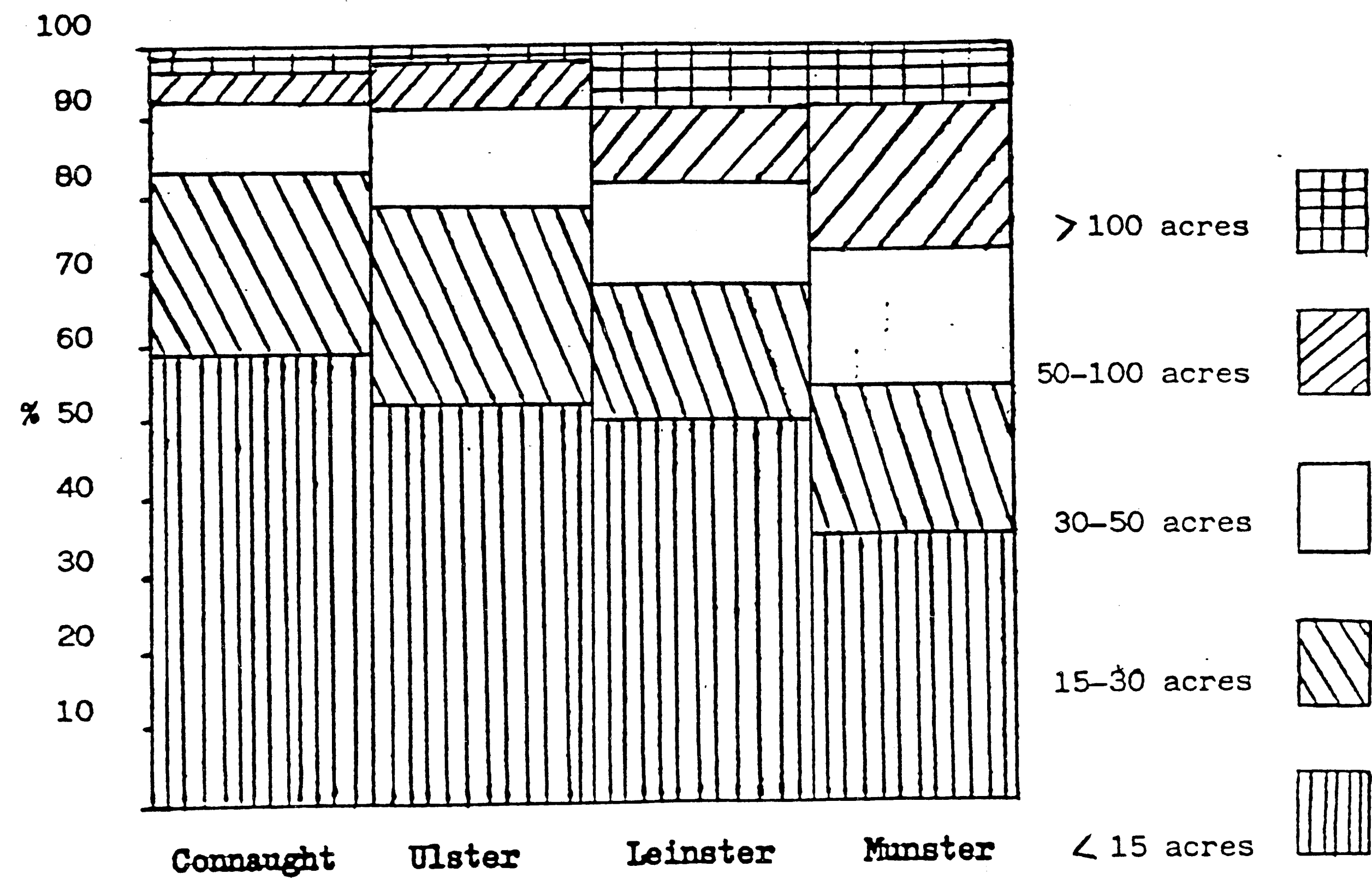
## CHAPTER ONE

### THE ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

#### I

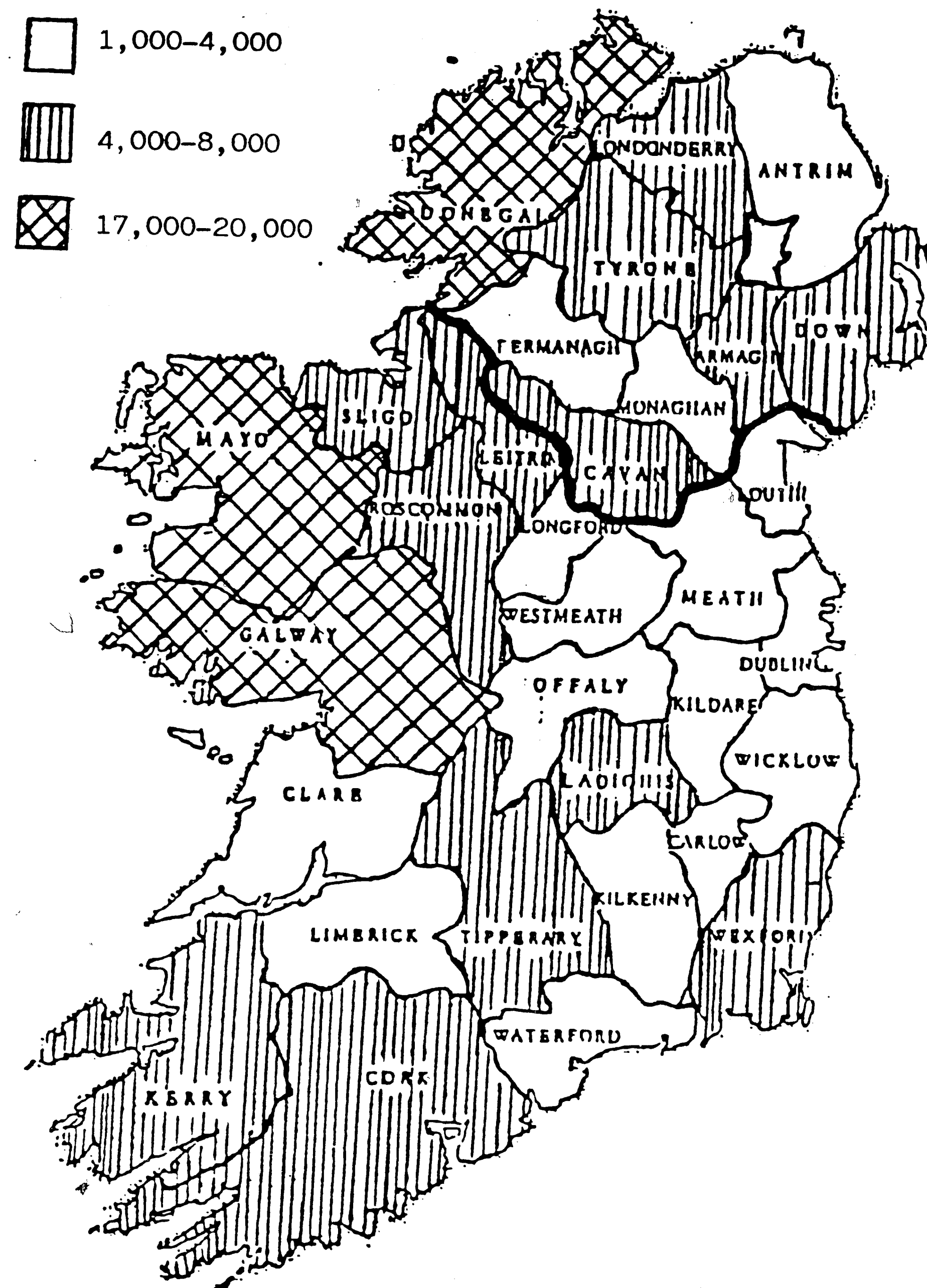
In the nineteenth century, Ulster was the largest, most populous province in Ireland. The three southern provinces contained between 123,000 and 133,000 farms while in Ulster there were over 200,000. Of these, more than half were small farms of less than 15 acres and only Connaught contained a higher proportion of farms in this category. (Figure 1) The inland areas of the province, including much of Armagh, Tyrone, and parts of Fermanagh, Monaghan, and Down were quite densely packed with small farms and much of Donegal, Cavan, and the Innishowen peninsula to the north of county Londonderry were severely congested districts. (Map 1)

**Figure 1. Proportion of Farms by Classes in Each Province  
in 1879**



Source: B.P.P. Holdings by Classes for Each Province ... in 1879,  
(1880), LXXVI, p.822.





Map 1. Distribution of Small Agricultural Holdings throughout Ireland, 1880.  
Holdings whose annual value was £4 and under (Griffith's Valuation)

Source: P. Bew, Land and the National Question in Ireland, 1858-82, (Dublin, 1978), p.148.



The great majority of tenants in Ulster held their farms on what, legally, were the most insecure bases: tenancy from year to year and at [the landlord's] will. A similar proportion of tenants in Connaught held their farms under the same conditions; while in Leinster and Munster there was a greater proportion of fixed-term leaseholders.<sup>1</sup> Rents in the province were comparable to those in the south and, in the late 1870s, averaged about 20% above 'Griffith's Valuation', the government survey carried out for tax purposes in the 1850s and '60s.<sup>2</sup>

Agricultural activity in Ulster was similar to that in the south. Oats and potatoes were the most important crops and there was a significant head of cattle, second only to Munster in number. The most important respect in which northern agriculture differed from that in the rest of Ireland was the growing and processing of flax. Flax was the third most important crop by volume in the north, the second, after oats, by value. Of 128,000 acres of flax grown in Ireland in 1879, 124,000 were planted in Ulster and, of 1,194 scutching mills, 1,152 were sited in the province.<sup>3</sup>

Contrary to contemporary belief, agricultural production in Ulster was less efficient than in every other province with the exception of Connaught. Between 1870 and 1879 the average rate of produce per acre of oats in the north was 12.49 cubits, compared to 13.01 cubits in Ireland as a whole. The equivalent figures for potato production were 3.07 tons in Ulster and 3.8 tons countrywide.<sup>4</sup> These figures, though

perhaps influenced by the intensive nature of flax cultivation which would have allowed northern farmers less time to tend their other crops, clearly show that the smaller farms which predominated in Ulster were less efficient than the larger farms generally found in the south and east of the country.

Not only was productivity in the north lower than in Leinster and Munster, but there are signs that the agricultural economy was not growing as fast as in these provinces. From the 1850s there were two pronounced trends in Irish agronomy looked at as a whole: a distinct shift from cropping toward more lucrative grazing, and extensive consolidation of farms into larger, more efficient units.<sup>5</sup> In Ulster, consolidation occurred at a much slower rate than in Leinster and Munster, and there was no development of livestock farming as in the other provinces. Between 1841 and 1879, the number of small holdings between 5 and 15 acres in Leinster and Munster decreased by 43.7% and 68.8% respectively. In Ulster the decrease was only 30.8%, while in Connaught continued sub-division actually led the number of farms in this category to increase by 6%.<sup>6</sup> Farmers in Leinster and Munster increased their herds of cattle by 11.2% and 10.4%, and in Connaught by 2.1%, between 1860 and 1878. In Ulster the total head of cattle actually decreased by 0.17%.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the acreage under arable crops in the three southern provinces decreased by between 12.7% and 16% from 1855 to 1878, partly as a result of the abandonment of marginal land and partly because of the extension of pasture, while in Ulster it increased by 0.65%.<sup>8</sup>

## II

Thus it is clear that the agricultural economy in Ulster was not developing and diversifying as it was in Leinster and Munster. While it was not regressing, as appears to have been the case in Connaught, it was doing little more than stagnating, and continued to rely heavily on the market for flax, oats, and potatoes. Yet in the decades immediately following the famine, agricultural produce prices rose considerably and contributed to a real and pervasive rise in living standards throughout the country. From 1855 to 1875 the value of agricultural produce rose on average by 40 to 50%. The price of store cattle, beef, and butter increased by between 40 and 100%, flax prices remained buoyant, while tillage prices fell as a result of New World competition.<sup>9</sup> In the same period rents do not appear, on average, to have increased by more than about 20%.<sup>10</sup> As a result, a significant redistribution of the relative shares of total agricultural income received by landlords and tenants occurred. While rent and labor costs increased by only 22.9% between 1852-4 and 1872-4, the increase in the value of agricultural output was 41%. Gross farming profits in the country as a whole rose from £8 million to £16 million during the period.<sup>11</sup>

From the mid-1870s, however, agricultural produce prices began to fall sharply as a consequence of foreign competition. Beef and grain prices collapsed in the face of the opening up of the American

mid-West and of improvements in transportation which included both the extension of railways and the advent of refrigerated steamships. At the same time, new co-operative ventures in Denmark and France made big inroads into the English butter and egg markets. The impact on Irish farm incomes of the fall in produce prices in the late 1870s was considerable. Combined with the succession of poor harvests between 1877 and 1879, when greatly reduced output was not matched with price rises, it was disastrous. The value of agricultural output in Ireland as a whole fell from an average of over £35 million in the three years ending in 1876 to an average of just £22.2 million in 1876-1879.<sup>12</sup>

In Ulster the shortfall in the harvest was as serious as elsewhere in the country. The yield of oats per acre fell from 14.4 cubits in 1876 to 10.8 in 1879, flax from 32.7 stores per acre to 23.9. More important was the decline in the potato crop from 5.0 tons per acre to just 1.1 tons.<sup>13</sup> Four of the five counties with the lowest yield of potatoes in 1879 - Cavan, Monaghan, Armagh and Down - were situated in the province.<sup>14</sup> For the great majority of small farmers in Ulster the loss was especially serious as potatoes were not a cash crop but their staff of life.

While some northern farmers enjoyed compensation from the rise of flax prices in 1879,<sup>15</sup> others were very hard hit by the catastrophic flooding of the Erne Valley which occurred during the fall,<sup>16</sup> and by the retraction of the market for seasonal laboring employment on the

mainland during the same year. In their preliminary report, published on January 1, 1880, the Irish investigators of the Richmond Commission noted:

In the inland small farm districts of Ulster a very large number of small farmers have made it a practice to go to England as labourers every year. They have come back and paid their rent and even shop debts with the money thus earned. Owing to the depression, very few of these<sup>17</sup> were able to save anything in England this year.

That the situation of many farmers in Ulster in the fall of 1879 was little short of desperate may be gauged by the generous abatements of rent offered by some landlords to their tenants before they were petitioned to do so and prior to the onset of agitation,<sup>18</sup> and also by the high eviction rate in the Province.<sup>19</sup> Yet despite all the indications of hardship it has frequently been assumed, incorrectly, that Ulster farmers were able to weather the depression better than their southern counterparts because they were afforded a degree of insulation by the local custom.<sup>20</sup> In fact, there is an abundance of evidence to suggest that since the middle of the century, and especially after the Land Act of 1870, the custom had been consistently eroded in scope and had become a major source of dissatisfaction among northern tenant farmers.

### III

The Ulster custom is difficult to define precisely because it was a custom and not a law. In essence, it recognised 'dual ownership' of

land by landlord and tenant. Its origins lay partly in the inducements used by seventeenth-century landlords to attract Protestant settlers to their estates and partly in the fact that the majority of Irish landlords did not provide services or facilities to their tenants in return for rent. Local interpretations of the custom were quite varied and contemporaries saw it as providing anything from the recognition of a tenant's right to the value of his improvements to a farm - buildings, fences, drainage, manuring and so on - through the range of the 'three Fs'.<sup>21</sup> For the purposes of litigation the Bessborough Commissioners found that it was most often defined as:

a usage whereby the tenant in occupation is entitled to sell his interest ... subject to the rent at which it is held, or such altered rent as shall not encroach upon the said interest ... at the best rate ... to any solvent tenant to whom the landlord shall not make reasonable objection.<sup>22</sup>

For two centuries the custom provided a generally acceptable basis for gauging the dual ownership of land in the north but in the context of economic developments in the post-famine years its efficacy became increasingly marred.

As has been shown, there was considerable consolidation of farms in the north from the 1850s. This development considerably exacerbated the 'land hunger' that was widely felt in the province, as in all Ireland and, in conjunction with greatly expanded credit facilities afforded by the growth of joint-stock banks,<sup>23</sup> led to rapidly escalating tenant-right values in the north. On the estates of

Sir Richard Wallace, Conservative M.P. for Lisburn, tenant-right values rose from £5-£8 per acre in 1845 to £12-£25 in the 1870s.<sup>24</sup> Elsewhere in the province, Finlay Dun, the Times Commissioner in Ireland, found that "the premium on entry frequently reached £30 to £40 an acre. Charged at 4% or 5%, this investment often more than doubled the rent."<sup>25</sup>

Many landlords were alarmed by the increasing scale of indebtedness that new tenants were obliged to contract in order to buy up the previous tenants' interests. "The time will come" claimed one,

... when Ulster will be the poorest part of Ireland because tenant-right sucks away from the land the capital that ought to enrich it ... thus stripped of capital it is impossible [that] a tenant should farm the land well. If a few bad years chance to come he is ruined and has to sell his interest.<sup>26</sup>

In addition, landlords feared that in poor seasons tenants would repay their financiers before they paid their rent.<sup>27</sup> These fears led landlords in many parts of the north to implement 'estate' or 'office' rules by which they restricted the value of tenant-right, often to a figure equivalent to three to five years rent.<sup>28</sup> 'Office' rules were defended by landlords as a means of protecting their tenants from 'usury' and 'extravagant expenditure'.<sup>29</sup> To tenants they were, according to James Nicholson Richardson, Liberal M.P. for county Armagh, "a fertile cause of ill-feeling and insecurity". By the end of the decade, Richardson claimed 'office' rules had become so widespread that "free sale in Ulster was practically non-existent".<sup>30</sup>



There is evidence to suggest that at the same time as landlords in the north began to limit the selling price of tenant-right, some of them shed the old style of 'patriarchal management', whereby a "landlord exacted a rent at less than the commercial value of his holding", and responded to market potential by raising rents.<sup>31</sup> The Bessborough Commission, appointed in 1880 to investigate the working of the Landlord and Tenant (Ireland) Act, (1870), concluded that legislation had directly encouraged the transition from paternalism to commercialism among landlords. The report claimed the Encumbered Estates Act (1849), under the auspices of which a quarter of the land in Ireland had exchanged hands, had led to "the purchase of land merely for the investment of capital ... with the intention of making all the money possible out of tenants".<sup>32</sup> More importantly from the perspective of northern farmers, the Land Act of 1870 had, claimed the Commissioners, "legalized" the Ulster custom in such a way that it extended landlords' traditional rights and allowed them, in law, to raise commercial rents without regard to the effect of increased rent on the value of tenant-right. Thus "landlords who previously were content to take low rents, appear to have begun a system of rent-raising when the Land Act was passed".<sup>33</sup> The Commissioners estimated that for every pound that rent was increased, some twenty pounds were deducted from the value of tenant-right,<sup>34</sup> and concluded that "in Ulster excessive rent-raising ... has, in some cases, almost 'eaten up' the tenant-right".<sup>35</sup>



Thus it is clear that in the 1870s the privileges traditionally afforded to northern farmers by the Ulster custom were being sharply eroded by many landlords. In particular, 'office' rules and rent raises were seriously reducing the market value of a tenant's interest in his farm and, in effect, served to render the conditions enjoyed by northern and southern tenants much more equitable than they previously had been. This situation led to intense excitement in the north and caused many tenant farmers to feel, in the words of Thomas Shillington, chairman of the Armagh Tenant Farmers' Association, "that it was but a question of time before the Ulster tenant-right on many estates will disappear altogether under the existing law".<sup>36</sup> Ulster farmers responded to these developments by forming tenants' defense associations which, during the 1870s, exerted pressure on the political representatives of the province to acquire a new land Act incorporating fair rents, free sale, and fixity of tenure. With the collapse in the value of produce and the disastrous seasons of 1877-9 which, as has been shown, affected the farmers in Ulster as deeply as elsewhere in Ireland, this political pressure was greatly intensified.

#### IV

Although many landlords increased their rents in the 1870s, a move which does not seem unfair in view of the great enhancement of farm incomes over the previous quarter century, their actions were clearly not the prime cause of the impoverishment of the tenantry.

The collapse of produce prices and concomitantly of the value of tenant-right seem to have been more responsible for this than the spread of the 'cash nexus'. Like W. Bence Jones, many landlords 'tried to do their duty' and continued to invest in their estates, albeit at the low level that was customary in Ulster, and to exercise a paternalistic style of management.<sup>37</sup> By seeking to restrict the sale value of tenant-right they sincerely hoped to protect tenants, as they had before, from the full implications of the free market, awash as it was, with plentiful credit and excessive demand for land.

Yet the atmosphere of 1879 was not one of understanding. Following, as it did, the two most prosperous decades of the century for Irish agriculture, the depression greatly exacerbated the already belligerent relationship which existed between landlords and tenants in many areas and provided the background of discontent against which Davitt, Parnell and others launched the 'New Departure'. In Ulster, landlord and tenant relations were little, if any, better than elsewhere by this time. It was against this background that the general election of 1880 was contested.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LAND, POLITICS AND THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 1880

#### I

During the quarter century after the famine the political representation of Ulster was dominated by the Conservative party. Between 1847 and 1868 the party held between twenty-four and twenty-eight of the twenty-nine boroughs and county seats. While the Conservatives lost some ground to the Liberals in the boroughs after the Reform Act of 1867, the party maintained a virtual monopoly of representation in the counties until 1874. (Table 1)

Table 1

Representation of Ulster Constituencies, 1847-1880

		<u>BOROUGHS</u>							
		1847	1852	1857	1859	1865	1868	1874	1880
C		9	9	7	10	11	8	8	10
L		2	2	4	1	0	3	3	1
		<u>COUNTIES</u>							
		1847	1852	1857	1859	1865	1868	1874	1880
C		16	17	17	18	16	17	13	8
L		2	1	1	0	2	1	3	8
H.R.		-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2

Source: F.W.S Craig, British Parliamentary Election Results, 1832-1885. (London, 1977), pp.635-9.

Tory predominance in Ulster throughout this period was virtually synonymous with landlord rule. While the Conservative members elected for the large urban centers of Belfast and Londonderry were generally employers or professional men, many of whom had secondary interests as landlords,<sup>1</sup> the county and the borough seats in the smaller provincial towns were invariably occupied by local landlords or their nominees. Here, the nomination of candidates constituted the vital electoral act. In the fifty-eight county elections held in Ulster between 1852 and 1868, less than 26% were contested. Elsewhere in Ireland the figure was 42%. In the Ulster boroughs the figure was reversed with 69% of elections going to the poll compared to 74% in the southern boroughs.<sup>2</sup> The greater number of uncontested elections in the Ulster counties seems to indicate that proprietary influence was more extensive than in the south. This may, in part, have reflected the fact that estates in Ulster were generally larger than elsewhere and smaller groups of landlords were therefore able to monopolise the representation of each constituency.<sup>3</sup> It may also have arisen from greater political consensus in the north.

The hold of the Conservative landocracy on provincial politics relied heavily on the deference vote. The political deference of northern farmers, which was clearly extensive during this period, reflected the traditionally good relationship between landlords and tenants in Ulster facilitated by the degree of racial and religious unity in the province, and by the balance of economic interests afforded by the local custom.<sup>4</sup> Where tenants were less deferential some landlords

seem to have been willing to use the threat of eviction or rent hikes to compel them to vote in accordance with their wishes.<sup>5</sup> The fortunes of the Conservatives in the countryside were also aided by the rural branches of the Orange Order.<sup>6</sup> Although the influence of the Order was not as pervasive as it was to become after 1885, it was a substantial political force in rural Ulster and at least one prominent Conservative representative, Sir Henry Hervey Bruce, was intimately connected with the leadership of the Grand Orange Lodge.<sup>7</sup>

Another factor contributing to the political predominance of the Conservatives was the restricted nature of the franchise in Ireland which, until parity was attained in 1884, was confined to a wealthier class than in the rest of Britain. Between 1850 and 1884 the franchise in the Irish counties was restricted to £10 freeholders and £12 rated occupiers, while on the mainland 40-shilling freeholders could vote. In the Irish boroughs an £8 valuation secured a vote until 1868, when the qualification was halved. Elsewhere in Britain any household valuation was sufficient.<sup>8</sup> Thus only the larger Irish farmers were enfranchised. In Ulster about one-third of farmers had the vote during the period 1850-84, proportionately less than in Leinster and Munster but more in Connaught, the most congested province. Some 79% of the Ulster county electorate consisted of farmers, a figure which was comparable to the rural electorates in the other provinces. (Table 2) Although Catholics outnumbered Protestants in five of the nine Ulster counties, (Appendix 1), and constituted some 56% of

farmers,<sup>9</sup> they tended to hold the smaller farms and only in Cavan did the Catholic electorate in the north outnumber Protestant voters.<sup>10</sup>

Table 2

Farmers and the County Electorate by Provinces, 1871

	Number of male farmers	Proportion of farmers holding a vote (%)	Proportion of country electorate consisting of farmers (%)
Leinster	67,972	43.2	65.2
Munster	85,169	45.8	83.4
Ulster	157,898	33.6	79.0
Connaught	81,212	17.4	79.0

Source: K. T. Hoppen, Elections, Politics and Society in Ireland, 1832-1855. (Oxford, 1984), p.105.

II

In the early 1870s several developments disrupted the existing pattern of Ulster politics and threatened Conservative hegemony in the northern counties. The most important of these was the Ballot Act of 1872. By freeing tenant farmers from the potential retribution of landlords the Act facilitated more representative polling throughout the country.<sup>11</sup> In the south the Act was a great fillip to the Nationalist party whereas in the north, in the absence of an alternative opposition, the prime beneficiaries were the Liberals. In the elections of 1874 and 1880 the party was able, for the first time, to draw on the votes of large numbers of Catholic and Presbyterian farmers.<sup>12</sup> Yet

the election of 1874 of Joseph Gillis Biggar and Charles Fay in County Cavan showed that Ulster Catholics were as committed to the Home Rule platform as their southern co-religionists.<sup>13</sup> Their support for Ulster liberalism at this time seems therefore to have been largely a result of the dearth of Nationalist candidates in the province.<sup>14</sup>

The growth of Ulster liberalism was also aided by the goodwill generated among northern Catholic and Presbyterian farmers by the Irish legislation of Gladstone's first administration and, more importantly, by its association with the issue of land reform. In the early 1870s, widespread dissatisfaction with the Land Act of 1870 coupled with distress caused by the poor seasons of 1871-3<sup>15</sup> led to a resurgence of the tenant-right movement in the province.<sup>16</sup> During the course of the decade, the movement gave birth to tenants' defense associations which, as they became more politically articulate, adopted a program of land reform based on the 'three Fs'. While they did not affiliate with any one party, as is shown by the support given to the Conservative tenant-righter John Ellison McCartney in the Tyrone election of 1874,<sup>17</sup> the tenants' defense associations became increasingly associated with the Ulster Liberal party which progressed, during the course of the decade, toward the land platform shared by these organisations. At Westminster the efforts of James Sharman Crawford, the Liberal member for county Down, to win a land Bill approximating to the 'three Fs' brought the Ulster party's increasingly advanced stance on the issue to the public eye.<sup>18</sup>



The Liberals in Ulster were not, however, the sole advocates of land reform during the 1870s. The Nationalists Fay and Biggar both endorsed the land reform platform of Isaac Butt which was virtually identical to that of the northern Liberals.<sup>19</sup> During the Disraeli administration McCartney, Edward Macnaghten, member for county Armagh, and John Mulholland, the representative for Downpatrick, all introduced land reform Bills to the House. The aim of these Bills was to grant greater security of tenure to tenants. Although they attracted support from most Ulster Conservatives they did not pass the Commons.<sup>20</sup> Other Conservatives and Liberals alike had already begun to look beyond the land laws and to advocate the establishment of a peasant proprietary through the mechanism of government loans as a solution to the land question.<sup>21</sup>

Thus it is clear that by the close of the decade all parties in Ulster were willing to endorse a measure of land reform. In the context of the depression of 1879 the demand of the Ulster tenantry for land reform was greatly intensified. "The farmers are bestirring themselves in view of the approaching election", noted the editor of the conservative Ulster Gazette, "the subject of tenant-right exercises their minds no matter of what shade of religion or politics".<sup>22</sup> In Fermanagh the local newspaper commented on the "new departure in hereditary politics marked by the remarkable meetings of tenants ... to proclaim their want of a representative who would support their views of tenant-right".<sup>23</sup> Faced by such excitement in the province it



was clearly a matter of political expediency for the candidates in the election of April 1880 to adopt a progressive stance on the issue.

### III

During the election campaign the leadership of the Conservative and Liberal parties on the mainland were silent about events in Ireland. In private, the ailing Disraeli was contemptuous of Irish agitation and loathe to yield further ground on the issue of land reform. Gladstone, unlike in 1868, seemed curiously apathetic, perhaps even ignorant of events in Ireland.<sup>24</sup> In Britain the election revolved around the great issues of foreign policy raised by Gladstone's Midlothian campaign. In Ireland it centered almost entirely on land. In the three predominantly Catholic provinces the radical, Parnellite faction of the Home Rule party fought an aggressive campaign against the moderate majority within the Nationalist ranks. The Parnellites proposed the immediate adoption of the 'three Fs' and a gradual but wholesale transfer of the ownership of land to its occupiers. During the course of the campaign they employed the Land League as electoral machinery and adopted the slogan 'Know your Landlord Enemy'!<sup>25</sup>

In Ulster, where only one radical Home Ruler - Biggar - stood and where, as yet, the Land League had not become established, the

land question was also the primary issue of the election. In the addresses of every candidate the question of agrarian reform was dealt with at length. The Liberal candidates all endorsed the 'three Fs' and several also advocated improving facilities for peasant proprietorship.<sup>26</sup> A similar agrarian platform was adopted by the Home Rule candidates,<sup>27</sup> while the Conservatives urged greater security of tenure for tenant farmers in the form of extending fixity of tenure. Four Conservatives advocated improving facilities for land purchase,<sup>28</sup> and two spoke of securing "reciprocity in trade" to restrict imports of New World agricultural produce.<sup>29</sup> During the campaign the Liberals benefited greatly from the assistance of tenant-right organisations,<sup>30</sup> and the Conservatives continued to derive support from the Orange Order although there is evidence to suggest that the land question was even now causing division within the movement.<sup>31</sup>

The result of the poll, at which there was a far higher turn-out than in 1874,<sup>32</sup> was dramatic. Of the thirteen Ulster county seats held by the Conservatives in 1874, five were lost to the Liberals and in Armagh a seat previously held by a "Tory member of the unyielding landocracy" was won by a "Conservative tenant-righter".<sup>33</sup> The balance of parties in the Ulster counties in 1880 saw the Conservatives and Liberals holding eight seats each and the Home Rulers retaining both seats in Cavan. In the boroughs the swing was reversed with the Liberals losing two to the Conservatives, retaining only one of the eleven seats. In the south the Nationalists secured only an additional three seats but the social composition of the party and the balance

between moderates and Parnellite radicals were dramatically altered. In 1874, fifty-four Home Rulers had been elected (excluding Fay and Biggar) of whom some thirty-four were landowners, holding an average of 4,700 acres each. In 1880, twenty of these landlord Home Rulers lost their seats, while nineteen Parnellites were elected for the first time of whom only three were landowners, holding an average of 300 acres each.<sup>34</sup>

Thus the usual pattern of parliamentary representation throughout Ireland was markedly altered by the election of 1880. The changes in the political affiliations and the social backgrounds of Ulster's representatives were as dramatic as those which occurred in the south. All of the Conservatives deposed in 1880 were landlords and none of the Liberals who replace them were. Seven of the Liberal M.Ps. elected were merchants or manufacturers. Hugh Law, M.P. for county Londonderry, was an English barrister; John Kinnear, representative for county Donegal, a Presbyterian minister. Three other Liberals were Presbyterians, two were members of the Church of Ireland, one a Congregationalist and another, Richardson, was a Quaker. All the Conservatives were landlords though Mulholland and William Ewart, the representative of Belfast, were primarily linen manufacturers and Macnaghten and McCartney were barristers. All belonged to the Church of Ireland with the exception of one Presbyterian. Both Home Rulers were Catholics and merchants.<sup>35</sup>

#### IV

The major beneficiaries of the election in Ulster were clearly the Liberals. By identifying themselves strongly with the tenant farmers' demand for the 'three Fs' they became a substantial force in the province for the first time. Flushed by success at the polls, Thomas Dickson, the representative for Dungannon, wrote to Gladstone "The day is not far off when we shall return Liberals for every county and borough in the north of Ireland except Belfast".<sup>36</sup> Yet the land reform platform upon which the Ulster Liberals were elected was not yet shared by the government and, as events were to reveal, the Liberals' hold over their constituents was to remain shaky over the forthcoming year and was ultimately to become untenable. The greatest achievement of the party in 1880 was to unseat four Conservatives in the two overwhelmingly Catholic counties of Donegal and Monaghan.<sup>37</sup> As such it is clear that it was able to attract the Catholic vote in the province. Yet the success of the radical Nationalists in the south shows that Catholic support for the Liberals in Ulster in 1880 was essentially gained because the Home Rule party, distracted as it was by its internecine power struggle, failed to field candidates throughout the north. Had it done so it seems likely that the Liberal vote would have been split and that the Conservatives would have won by default. Already the prospect of a Nationalist 'invasion' of the north, coupled with a more popular franchise which gave Catholics proportionate representation in the electorate, augured

the demise of the northern liberals. In this sense the end of the brief heyday of Ulster Liberalism was in sight just as it was being born.

Despite their losses in the Ulster counties the Conservative vote remained resilient in some areas. This seems partly to have reflected the good reputation of certain candidates among the tenantry. In Lisburn, Sir Richard Wallace (Lord Hertford) was renowned for his low rents which were appreciably less than Griffith's Valuation,<sup>38</sup> while in Fermanagh both Viscount Crichton (the Earl of Erne) and William Archdale had won favour by granting abatements of rent to their tenantry without being first petitioned.<sup>39</sup> Both these men were also instrumental in promoting the Erne valley drainage scheme which had been implemented with great success and benefit to the tenantry during the fall of 1879.<sup>40</sup> Other landlords held in esteem to be elected in 1880 included Viscount Castlereagh<sup>41</sup> and Arthur Hill (Lord Downshire), the representatives of county Down. Thus it is clear that popular landlords were able to weather the political climate prevalent in 1879-80. Nevertheless, the gains made by the Liberals were a source of considerable disquiet to the Conservatives and influenced their activity during the forthcoming sessions.

The defeat of many Conservative landlords at the polls, among whom were the Marquis of Hamilton in Donegal, Lord Claude Hamilton in Tyrone and Sir John Leslie in Monaghan, clearly spelled out a remarkable decline in rural deference in Ulster in 1880, similar in extent to that which occurred in the south. At the same time, the

social backgrounds of the non-Conservative M.Ps. who were elected reflected the gains made by the middle classes over the landed interest in the south.<sup>42</sup> Thus it is clear that political developments in Ulster in 1879-80 were very similar to those in the remaining provinces with the important difference that the Catholic electorate in the north underpinned the Liberal party. This has been interpreted as marking "the lowest ebb of northern agrarian sectionalism".<sup>43</sup> Yet in the light of our discussion it seems more accurate to remark that, though freed by the Ballot Act and animated by the land issue, the voting pattern of the tenantry was fundamentally influenced by the absence of Nationalist candidates in the north. The truly important and potentially lasting development was the division of the rural Presbyterian vote between the Liberal and Conservative parties.

## CHAPTER THREE

### POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS AND THE LAND LEAGUE IN ULSTER, APRIL 1880 TO JANUARY 1881

#### I

When the new parliament convened in May 1880 eleven of the twenty-nine Ulster members were pledged to winning a land act incorporating the 'three Fs'. The remaining eighteen members, all Conservatives, acknowledged that a measure of land reform was desirable but were not amenable, at this stage, to such extensive legislation. The new Liberal government, however, did not have immediate plans for land reform in Ireland and in the Queen's speech the Lord Chancellor, Selborne, remarked simply that "the question of the sufficiency of the advances already authorized by parliament for the mitigation of distress in Ireland ... is under my consideration".<sup>1</sup> Faced by this lack of official initiative Ulster's representatives sponsored two private members' Bills. The Conservatives McCartney and Lewis introduced a 'Bill for the Better Securing the Tenant-Right custom in the Province of Ulster'; while Litton, Dickson, Givan, Findlater and Richardson, all Liberals, introduced a Fixity of Tenure (Ireland) Bill, the aim of which was "... to secure to tenants of agricultural holdings in Ireland fixity of tenure at fair rent".<sup>2</sup> Neither of these bills attained a second reading.



The vacillation of the government in the spring of 1880 led the Land League, which had first become established in May the previous year, to intensify its campaign in the south. League branches multiplied, resistance to eviction increased, rents above 'Griffith's Valuation' were withheld and the policy of 'Boycotting' was widely adopted. Ulster remained peaceable, but the tenant-right organisations renewed their efforts to secure land reform. "If Ulster-Protestant Ulster-demanded a good tenant-right bill", commented one northern editor, "the government would yield at once instead of flaunting 'confiscation and robbery' in our teeth".<sup>3</sup> Faced with mounting disorder Forster, the chief architect of the government's Irish policy, introduced the Compensation for Disturbance Bill on June 18 and, on July 29, appointed the Bessborough Commission to investigate the working of the Irish Land Act of 1870 with a view of legislating improvements.<sup>4</sup>

The aim of the Compensation for Disturbance Bill was to prevent evictions. Its principal tenet was to oblige landlords to pay compensation, on a set scale, to all tenants whose farms were rated at less than thirty pounds per annum, if they were evicted for non-payment of rent and could prove, first, that they were unable to pay rent because of the impact of the previous two poor seasons. Second, that they were willing to continue their tenancy on just terms and third, that their landlord had refused these terms. The Bill applied only to certain 'scheduled' poor law districts and until 31 December 1881.<sup>5</sup> Thus it was a limited and temporary provision.



There is evidence to suggest that the government had at first envisaged more extensive legislation but had curtailed the scope of the Bill in order to prevent the resignation from the cabinet of the Duke of Argyll.<sup>6</sup>

From the beginning, Forster made it clear that "the Bill ... practically ... is limited to those unions outside of Ulster ... for this reason: I cannot conceive that any tenant in Ulster would seek to make use of this Bill when he has a much stronger remedy - tenant-right - which gives him a much larger compensation".<sup>7</sup> Perhaps for this reason, the Ulster members took very little part in the debates. The Conservatives were conspicuous by their silence though Bruce spoke against the measure<sup>8</sup> and McCartney, supporting him at a later date, claimed that "if the depreciation of prices was made a reason for non-payment of rent, the landlords might as well go at once to America, or become beggars".<sup>9</sup> Biggar used the opportunity simply to attack the government and was frequently called to order,<sup>10</sup> while the Liberals were content to warn the government of the desirability of "a power to extend the operation of the measure ... [otherwise] if the harvest was bad, Parliament would not be able to act quickly".<sup>11</sup>

The Compensation for Disturbance Bill passed the Commons on July 26 though over twenty Liberals voted against the government and fifty more abstained.<sup>12</sup> Every Ulster Conservative voted against the measure while the Liberals and Home Rulers in the province all supported it (Appendix 2). In August, after only two days

consideration, the Lords rejected the Bill, with only 51 peers voting for it.<sup>13</sup> The reasons for the Conservatives' wholesale rejection of the Bill, both in the Commons and the Lords, were two-fold: not only did it threaten the exercise of property rights, albeit in a limited and temporary way, but it also seemed to condone the activities of the Land League. Thus their actions were as much a 'gut' reaction to Irish nationalism as they were an appraisal of the merits of the Bill.<sup>14</sup> For the government the rejection of the Compensation for Disturbance Bill was a serious setback. As Parliament prepared for the recess the number of evictions grew considerably as landlords began to issue process against tenants whose accumulated debts, often of more than two years rental, they were no longer prepared to tolerate. Against this background the agitation in Ireland assumed very serious proportions.

## II

In Ulster, the effect of the rejection of the Compensation for Disturbance Bill was spectacular. As elsewhere, it created fear among the tenantry that the landed interest in Parliament would defeat whatever proposals for land reform that were introduced. Combined with the feeling of insecurity caused by the ever-rising number of evictions, the Lords' action led farmers in the province to begin, sponantaneously, to establish branches of the Land League. The Impartial Reporter, which recorded the inaugural meeting of the Land

League in Fermanagh on August 26, noted on December 9 "that the Land League has now, throughout the county, strong branches in which Protestants and Catholics meet as fellow tenants". By fall the League had arrived in Down, Armagh, Tyrone and Londonderry as well as Fermanagh. Many of the Orange Lodges in these counties were converted into tenant-right clubs,<sup>15</sup> and at least two affiliated themselves directly with the Land League.<sup>16</sup>

In the winter, the agitation in Ulster intensified and 'boycotting' and the withholding of rent became widespread.<sup>17</sup> Law and order in the province began to break down as landlord and loyalist organizations began to involve themselves in increasingly violent clashes with the League.<sup>18</sup> In Derrygonnelly, the scene of some of the most violent clashes, the tenants on the estates of William Archdale formed a particularly militant branch of the Land League in which "Protestants outnumbered Catholics by two to one".<sup>19</sup> The local press in Fermanagh, where the agitation was especially violent, reported incidents such as a Protestant speaker at a League meeting mentioning "the possibility of the need for recourse to fire and the sword".<sup>20</sup> In the province as a whole there was a veritable explosion of agrarian crime. In the final quarter of 1880 there were 166 recorded cases of agrarian outrage in Ulster compared to a total of only 93 in the previous nine months.<sup>21</sup>

One effect of the spread of the Land League and of the growth of agrarian crime in the province was a decline in the number of

evictions. Between the third and final quarters of 1880 the number actually carried out in Ulster fell from 172 to 55,<sup>22</sup> leading the editor of the Impartial Reporter to comment wryly on "the effect of the Land League in carrying into effect the Compensation for Disturbance Bill".<sup>23</sup> The amount of rent owing by each tenant in Ulster against whom an ejectment decree was issued (but not necessarily executed) in the Michaelmas sessions of 1880 was, in round figures, £35. This was comparable to the £31 and £34 owing by tenants in Leinster and Munster but appreciably more than the £25 average arrears of rent which attracted ejectment decrees in Connaught.<sup>24</sup> Some 65.7% of farmers evicted in Ulster were, however, readmitted as tenants or caretakers. In the other provinces the equivalent figures ranged between 48% and 53.5%.<sup>25</sup>

### III

Another result of the growth of agitation throughout Ireland was a rallying of landlord and Conservative forces and the formation of anti-Land League organizations. In Ulster, the Land League faced especially severe opposition from the combined forces of the press, the executive and the Orange Order. The Orangemen's principal tactic against the League in the north was to stage counter-meetings close to or at the venues of pre-arranged Land League meetings. By this method they succeeded in persuading the magistracy to proclaim many League meetings a threat to public order. Those that did proceed

were often disrupted by violence.<sup>26</sup> There was frequent collusion between the magistracy and the Order which was openly apparent on several occasions when acting in their official capacities, northern magistrates led groups of armed Orangemen against Land League meetings.<sup>27</sup> Magistrates also employed other equally ultra vires means to suppress the League. Thus, in Tralee, the principal members of the local branch were arrested and imprisoned on charges of sedition after passing a resolution to 'boycott' a local landlord although, clearly 'boycotting' was not a criminal act.<sup>28</sup>

With the exception of the Impartial Reporter, the Ulster press was unanimously hostile to the Land League and it is possible that some northern editors issued disinformation about it. Thus, in reporting a meeting of the League in county Armagh the Ulster Gazette claimed that of 100 present, "almost all were strangers", many of whom were "farm laborers and town loafers".<sup>29</sup> Shortly thereafter the same newspaper reported ominously "the principles of the Land League were some short time ago 'planted' in certain parts of county Armagh. The tenants who were foolish enough to adopt them find themselves at the present moment cast out upon the world".<sup>30</sup> Parnell, who owned an estate in Kinnego, county Armagh, was the subject of especially virulent attacks from the northern press<sup>31</sup> as too, on occasion, was Gladstone whom, as "the head and author of this agrarian rebellion", at least one editor wished to see impeached.<sup>32</sup>

Yet the press was entirely sympathetic to land reform and even the arch-conservative Ulster Gazette, from which the above extracts are taken, held that "it is an absolute necessity that the laws relating to landlord and tenant should be materially modified".<sup>33</sup> The seeming ambiguity of the press, and indeed, of the Orange Order which was forced to promote land reform in order to retain a degree of consensus within its ranks,<sup>34</sup> is well illustrated in a letter entitled "A Specimen of Land Leaguers fishing for Orangemen", published in the paper in February. "We Irish Protestants of all classes", claimed the author,

... cannot afford to abolish landlordism. If it goes we will almost certainly go after it. But what we want is a law which will regulate the dealings of bad landlords - men who would screw the last shilling out of honest hard-working farmers and who care for no creed but the almighty shilling ... In the meantime, Protestant farmers should avoid canting Liberals and spider-like Land Leaguers.<sup>35</sup>

Thus it is clear that opposition to the Land League in the north was by no means synonymous with opposition to land reform. The conservative press, the Orange Order, and, as has been shown, the Tory M.Ps. in the province were all willing to promote a measure of land reform. The sheer virulence of the attacks foisted from these quarters on the Land League had more to do with the repugnance felt for its Catholic and Nationalist undertones than with what it stood for. In the face of considerable Protestant involvement in the Land League this virulence was not unnaturally amplified.



#### IV

The offensive waged by elements in the north against the Land League was not confined solely within the borders of the province. When, late in the fall of 1880, Viscount Crichton publicized the predicament of Captain Boycott, the agent responsible for his Lough Mask estates in county Mayo,<sup>36</sup> over three hundred Orange laborers were despatched by public subscription to relieve him. Forster, not surprisingly, was greatly worried by this development and on November 8 wrote to Gladstone that he feared "civil war" and had sent five hundred infantry and three squadrons of cavalry to the locality in order to prevent serious disturbances.<sup>38</sup> The Boycott expedition was a considerable, if costly, success and early in the new year the Grand Orange Lodge, which had been greatly encouraged by the affair, established the 'Orange Emergency Committee' in order to intensify the campaign against the League. In the following eighteen months, this organization procured process servers and buyers at sheriffs' sales, and provided laborers to the victims of 'boycotts' in nineteen counties.<sup>39</sup>

The Orange Emergency Committee, however, was never as large or as influential as the Dublin-based Property Defense Association which, like the O.E.C., relied almost exclusively on Orange laborers to perform its work.<sup>40</sup> Nor did it have a popular base in rural Ulster itself. Thus, in an article entitled "The Orange Emergency Committee", the editor of the Ulster Gazette rued "We are sorry on

looking over the list of subscriptions that county Armagh Orangemen have not given that pecuniary support which would be expected from a loyal county".<sup>41</sup>

The reasons behind the meagreness of the achievement of the O.E.C. are precisely the same as those which prevented the Order achieving a decisive victory against the Land League in Ulster itself: the land issue divided it into two competing camps, the urban and landed elements of the organisation, and the Orange tenant farmers. This division was apparent as early as the fall of 1879 when the Impartial Reporter commented:

We are delighted to see a plain farmer rebuking by his sound common sense the 'loyal' twaddle and landlords' clerical pleading so much in vogue. Mr Robert Carrothers is a hot Orangeman, a loyal man, a good neighbour and a sound churchman and after hearing clergymen talking on various topics he rebukes them for avoiding the most important question of the day - the Land Question ... The clergy have in general been arrayed against the people, and by clap-trap speeches about 1688 and Home Rulers and Popery have sought to divide the farmer from the one subject he is interested in.<sup>42</sup>

By late 1880 the split so serious that the leaders of the Grand Orange Lodge were obliged to make substantial concessions to the degree of land reform which, as an organisation, they felt it necessary to advocate in order to conciliate the disaffected Protestant farmers.<sup>43</sup>

In many respects, however, the new stance of the Order came too late to maintain its influence over significant numbers of Protestant farmers, many of whom participated in the Land League. In December



Michael Davitt, following in the tentative footsteps of Parnell the previous September, commenced a speaking tour in Ulster to recruit more Protestants into the League. By all accounts, his tour was a considerable success and he won not only converts but also respect from the Protestant tenantry for his courage.<sup>44</sup> The Impartial Reporter noted his "signal success in the very Protestant and very Orange county of Armagh" and, reporting on one meeting which the local justices tried unsuccessfully to proscribe, commented on "the example of the folly of county magistrates endeavouring to crush public opinion".<sup>45</sup>

V

Thus it is clear that the Land League in Ulster enjoyed considerable success. While most Protestant farmers continue to participate in the land agitation through the tenants' defense associations, a significant number, along with many Catholic tenants, chose the more direct and rapacious forms of agitation that were commensurate with membership of the Land League. Those who joined the Land League in the north faced much greater intimidation than did their peers in the south and this factor may have prevented it from becoming even more widespread in the province. In any case, the co-operation between Catholic and Protestant farmers in the Ulster Land League shows categorically that religious and even 'national'

loyalties did not prevent the Protestant tenantry from pursuing the class war that was at the bottom of the struggle for land reform.

The most important factor behind the growth of the League in Ulster was clearly the rejection of the Compensation for Disturbance Bill. The haughtiness with which the House of Lords and the province's Conservative M.Ps. rejected the measure led the 'passive' breakdown in traditional patterns of social deference which had been evident at the general election to develop into a wider campaign of civil and social disobedience, most often manifested through the channel of the Land League. Once this had occurred, the conservative elements in the province were forced to alter their positions and to espouse a much more radical land platform than they had previously been disposed to for fear of failing to halt the further spread of disaffection among the Protestant tenantry. This, indirectly, was the League's most important achievement in the north.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RE-ORIENTATIONS: CONSERVATIVES, LIBERALS AND THE 'THREE FS'

#### I

The combined pressure of the Land League and the tenants' defense associations in Ulster during 1880 prompted not only the Orange Order but also the province's Conservative M.Ps. to advocate a more radical measure of land reform. As has been seen, the Ulster Tories were elected on a platform of moderate land reform yet despite their electoral promises, they voted en bloc against the meagre and temporary provisions of the Compensation for Disturbance Bill. Alarmed by events in their constituencies during late 1880, however, the northern Conservatives executed a complete volte face and by early 1881 many of their number had declared in favor of the 'three Fs'. In December, these developments were reflected in the controversy which arose in Ulster following the publicization of Northcote's definition of the 'three Fs' as "force, folly and fraud". "Sir Stafford", wrote the editor of the staunchly conservative Belfast News-Letter:

... does not represent the feelings of the Conservative members from Ulster. We do not wish him to compromise the Conservative party in this country, or to further reduce its numbers and influence already injured too much by the sayings and doings of leading members of the English Conservative party.

Thus a rift was beginning to open up in the Conservative ranks which only the previous August had been so solid.

The primary reason for the Ulster Conservatives' changed stance was clearly that they felt a Bill incorporating the 'three Fs' was necessary to restore order in the province. At the same time, they began to cling to the notion that such a measure, suitably tempered, would not have any tangible effect on landlord incomes or, indeed, on landlord-tenant relations on the larger estates in Ulster. These sentiments were publicly expressed by MaCartney on New Year's Eve when he spoke in favor of the 'three Fs'. "Such a measure would not", he argued, "materially affect the system at present adopted on the largest and best-managed estates in Ulster. I do not think that anything less will allay the ferment which the Land League agitation has raised."<sup>2</sup>

In the following months, members of the Cabinet encouraged northern Conservatives in these beliefs while presenting the Land Bill to Parliament. Gladstone spoke of the Bill as being intended to curtail the abuses of small landlords.<sup>3</sup> While Hugh Law, the Irish Attorney-General, claimed that "all that would probably happen would be that a certain number of rack-rented tenants would get their rents reduced and have a limited fixity of tenure".<sup>4</sup> Forster, speaking of how he expected the Bill would effect Ulster, stated that "we have no expectation that the low-rented tenants would venture to go into the [land] court". At the same time he held out the prospect of an

increase in land values arising from the lasting stability which he hoped the Bill would instill.<sup>5</sup> When the Land Bill eventually became law, Conservative hopes in this regard were high. "We sincerely hope the measure may benefit the farmers of Ireland", commented the editor of the Coleraine Constitution, "though in this province it will not make much change, as the relationships between landlord and tenant on the principal estates have always been kindly and agreeable".<sup>6</sup>

In fact, as is shown below, the Land Act had a more significant effect on rents in Ulster than in any other province. In the light of the Cabinet's statements that this would not be the case, two conclusions may be drawn. Either the government was prevaricating, or, as seems more likely, it had very little appreciation of what the true impact, in economic terms, of the Land Act would be.<sup>7</sup> Had the Ulster Conservatives anticipated the true outcome of the Land Act it seems likely that they would not have lent their support to the measure. Thus, in a letter read before a landlord conference in Dublin four months after it had come into effect, Mulholland wrote:

Having supported the Land Act, I want to explain that my support was given on the faith of the assurance of Mr Gladstone that the intention of the fair rent clause was to meet those cases where rent had been arbitrarily increased, and that it was not the intention to disturb the existing standard ... The Sub-Commissioners have been reducing rents generally.

Thus it is clear that the Ulster Conservatives were drawn to the platform of the 'three Fs' by a combination of fear of the agitation in the north and of belief that on many of the estates in the province the

'three Fs' were already observed in practice, if not in name. By changing their stance in this way, they were fully aware not only that they were abandoning southern Irish landlords to the prospect of considerable financial loss but also that they were opening up a division within the Conservative ranks at Westminster. At the same time, their re-alignment created much greater consensus in Ulster and, by early 1881, a near unanimity of opinion in favour of the 'three Fs' existed among the political representatives and most strata of society in the province.

## II

Gladstone's path to the 'three Fs' was no less tortuous than that of the Ulster Conservatives. As has been seen, his government took office having made no commitment to and little mention of Irish Land reform; in the following three months the Prime Minister's correspondence was dominated by the Bradlaugh affair and by matters of foreign policy. At first, Gladstone seems to have hoped that a good harvest would remove the need for legislative interference in Ireland and, failing this, that the agitation might be quelled "simply by adapting and invigorating his old Act".<sup>9</sup> It was, in fact, W. E. Forster, the Irish Secretary, who took the initiative in Ireland in the forthcoming year and it was he who was responsible for the Compensation for Disturbance Bill and the appointment of the Bessborough Commission.<sup>10</sup>

Initially, Forster was keen to persuade Gladstone to extend the Bright clauses of the Land Act of 1870 but the Prime Minister dismissed this suggestion in May claiming that "Ireland had been illegitimately paid for unjust inequalities by an unjust preference in much lavish expenditure".<sup>11</sup> Instead, Gladstone preferred to side-step the issue of land reform and to concentrate on his 'Grand Committees' scheme for the reform of Irish local government and, until this proposal was defeated by the Cabinet in December, he used it as a means to stall Forster who was an early and enthusiastic supporter of the 'three Fs'.<sup>12</sup> By the fall, however, the agitation had reached such a pitch that Gladstone was forced to accord greater attention to the land issue. In October, Forster wrote to him urging the adoption of a strong land Bill the following session and warning "We had better do nothing than tinker".<sup>13</sup> Gladstone chose to continue to stall on the issue and in November he informed the Irish Secretary that he would not "approach the subject of the Land Bill until we know something of the recommendations of our commission."<sup>14</sup> On December 3 he wrote to Forster that he feared the 'three Fs' "... would break the Cabinet without conciliating the Leaguers".<sup>15</sup>

In the ensuing two days, however, two events occurred which seem to have had a profound influence on Gladstone. On December 4 he received Finlay Dun, the Times Commissioner in Ireland who, by virtue of his position, had been able to meet many important landlords in Ireland and especially in Ulster where, as his book reveals, he had acquired valuable insights into the issues.<sup>16</sup> Gladstone was greatly



impressed by Dun and later in the day wrote to Forster "He stated the 'three Fs' extremely well and argued them stoutly".<sup>17</sup> The following day Gladstone received from Forster a memorial in favour of the 'three Fs' signed by every Ulster Liberal M.P. which had been submitted to the Irish Secretary on December 1. In the memorial, the Ulster members warned the government that:

Legislation should take the form of a substantive measure and not be a mere amendment of the Land Act of 1870 ... Any hesitation to deal with the question in a broad and liberal spirit would cause the present constitutional agitation in Ulster to assume a very serious aspect.

They went on to spell out precisely what form they felt the Land Bill ought to take, claiming that it should be:

... a measure framed on the principle of complete security of tenure - fair rents - and full liberty to the tenant to realize the value of his improvements and his interest in his holding ... together with a reasonable system by which a peasant proprietorship may be created.<sup>18</sup>

Four days later Gladstone wrote to Forster, "I admit that we cannot escape a legislative interference with rents: Yet I hope it may be on the lines of the Land Act and once for all"<sup>19</sup>

Thus it would seem that Gladstone's acceptance of a radical land Bill occurred sometime during the first two weeks of December, and that his decision was greatly influenced by the analyses of events in Ulster expressed to him both by Dun and by the Ulster Liberal M.Ps. His commitment, however, was not unwavering and as late as January 10 Forster was still writing to him urging him to make a clear sweep of the 'three Fs' in the forthcoming Bill.<sup>20</sup> On January 4, the arguments



of Forster and the Ulster Liberals gained valuable support from the report of the Bessborough Commission: "In a word", wrote four of the five commissioners, "we advocate the reform of the Land Law of Ireland upon the basis known as the 'three Fs'."<sup>21</sup>

## CHAPTER FIVE

### TOWARD A SETTLEMENT: THE LAND ACT OF 1881

#### I

When Parliament convened, one month early, on January 6, 1881, the situation in Ireland was very serious. The spread of agrarian agitation and the growth of related lawlessness throughout the country since the previous fall had effectively overwhelmed the normal facilities for maintaining order and threatened to escalate to even direr proportions. Alarmed by developments, the government, which as yet had not made detailed plans for the Land Bill, announced its intention to introduce emergency coercive measures in Ireland and to follow these at a later date with an unspecified reform of the Land Act of 1870.<sup>1</sup>

This schedule of events seems to have been largely unexpected and while the Ulster Conservatives approved of it,<sup>2</sup> the response of the Liberals was one of anger and disappointment. Litton, speaking during the debate on the Queen's speech claimed that the government:

had placed the Ulster members in a position of embarrassment ... When he recalled that they were asked to apply coercion to their fellow countrymen [and] that Her Majesty's speech merely commended an extension of the Land Act of 1870, he for one, must give expression to the widespread and bitter disappointment which had been diffused throughout the whole of Ulster.

He argued further that the government's failure to propose a strong land Bill made the Ulster Liberals "almost ridiculous in the eyes of their constituents",<sup>3</sup> a view shared by those of his colleagues who spoke during this extended debate. Richardson "doubted if the government was fully aware of the consensus of opinion which existed in Ireland for the 'three Fs'... Nothing less would satisfy the respectable tenantry of Ulster".<sup>4</sup> John Given, M.P. for county Monaghan, was "convinced that it was a gross mistake to introduce a coercion Bill instead of a remedial measure", and claimed that "in consequence ... many of those who had stood aloof from the Land League were now joining it".<sup>5</sup>

Undaunted, the Liberals continued their behind-the-scenes efforts and in mid-January organized a deputation which met with Gladstone and impressed upon him the importance of the 'three Fs'.<sup>6</sup> On January 14, they received further support in the preliminary report of the Richmond Commission. While the majority report specifically rejected the 'three Fs' as a basis for reform, advocating instead emigration, public works schemes and "legislative interference to protect the tenant from arbitrary increases of rent", the minority report, signed by Lord Carlingford and five others, proposed legislation to establish the 'three Fs' and to create "a widely disseminated class of farming proprietors".<sup>7</sup> In the meantime, the Protection of Persons and Property (Ireland) Bill was ferociously debated in Parliament. While the Ulster Conservatives supported the

government in the matter of coercion,<sup>8</sup> the Liberals took very little part in the debates and, with the exception of Dr Kinnear, who joined the two Home Rulers of the province in voting against the introduction of the Bill, generally abstained from the divisions.

## II

Once coercive powers to deal with the unrest in Ireland had been secured Gladstone turned, in April, to deal with "... the most difficult and complex question with which in the course of my public life I have ever had to deal".<sup>9</sup> The Land Bill that he introduced on the seventh was constructed along the lines recommended by the Bessborough Commission and the Ulster Liberals. It was very complicated in format, an observation made from all sides of the House.<sup>10</sup> Its essential clauses recognized the right of free sale, unrestricted by 'office' rules, sought to establish land courts to determine fair rents, which were to be reviewed at fifteen year intervals, gave fixity of tenure by greatly limiting a landlord's right of eviction, and made some provision for government loans to tenants to enable them to purchase their farms.<sup>11</sup>

The Bill was well received by the Ulster Liberals though Litton "reserved the right to try and improve [it]".<sup>12</sup> Even the more reluctant Conservatives expressed a conviction in its necessity. Lewis felt that although "the Bill would and could only be looked at as the

endowment of agitation and outrage ... he would support it".<sup>13</sup> Bruce "believed that the measure would restore peace and tranquility to his unhappy country. No matter what harm it might do himself (a landlord) he would go most willingly into the lobby with Ministers in every division".<sup>14</sup> Most Ulster Conservatives supported the views of Macnaghten who felt that "good landlords had nothing to fear",<sup>15</sup> and of Close "who could not shut his eyes to the fact that a postponement of legislation ... would work most fatal injury to the peace of Ireland".<sup>16</sup>

The Bill, however, drew fierce criticism from other Conservatives, among the most persistent, scathing and articulate of whom were Edward Gibson, M.P. for Dublin University, who felt that it put aside "not only political economy but also the whole spirit of English law",<sup>17</sup> and John Chaplin, M.P. for mid-Lincolnshire, who ventured that it was "a great scheme of judicial plunder ... the greatest and most hallowed act of public confiscation ever adopted by any statesman in a civilised country".<sup>18</sup> From an early stage the support shown by the Ulster Conservatives for the Bill drew strong criticism from their party colleagues and especially from those from the south of Ireland who clearly stood to lose most. Thus in a particular vitriolic speech Colonel Arthur Loftus Tottenham, M.P. for country Leitrim, complained:

It is thrown in the teeth of the opponents to it that some of the Ulster landlords have no objection to [the Land Bill] ... Of what consequence is the opinion of these few individuals who have already got the custom established and therefore will not

be much affected by it and who do not care, or are unable to look beyond their own selfish interests instead of regarding this not as an Ulster, but as an Irish, aye as an Imperial question.<sup>19</sup>

The Conservative party's objection to the Land Bill did not rest solely on its anticipated effect on landlords in the south of Ireland. Moreover, it was seen as the thin end of the wedge of a concerted attack on private property in land. To understand this fully, it must be recalled that the ideas of Henry George and John Stuart Mill were in their heyday during this period and, at the same time, the Gladstone government had been elected with a commitment to extend the franchise to farm laborers. Thus, their opposition to the Bill arose as much from English as it did from Irish reasons.<sup>20</sup> But in order to defeat the Bill the Conservatives needed the support of the Ulster Tories. Without this they were outnumbered in the Commons and compromised in the House of Lords. Despite the pressure exerted upon them the Ulster members remained intransigent and as a consequence their relations with their party colleagues at Westminster reached a very low ebb. In July, John Gorst expressed the exasperation he felt for the recalcitrant Ulster Tories in a letter to W. H. Smith:

The Ulster landowners do not seem to me to be capable of regarding the Land Bill from any but a selfish point of view, and are apparently ready on every occasion to sacrifice both sound policy and common sense to their fancied interests... I have too much regard for liberty to prevent the Ulster members from going their own way, however unwise I may think it. What I protest against is their insisting upon dragging the whole Conservative party in bondage at their heels, and expecting people to subordinate opinions based on

actual experience to the crude ideas which they hastily take up as most in accordance with what they imagine to be their own interest.<sup>21</sup>

Faced with this situation Gibson, Northcote and others began to shift their stance and to accept that now that the Bill had been introduced and aired, it was unlikely that it could be blocked in its essentials without disastrous consequences in Ireland.<sup>22</sup>

### III

Although the Ulster M.Ps. gave a warm welcome to the Land Bill, they did not give it unqualified support. They wanted to see it pass and all the Liberals and thirteen of the eighteen Conservatives voted for its second reading with only one Conservative, Viscount Cole, the member for Enniskillen, voting against it. (Appendix 2) In the committee stage both Liberals and Conservatives were prominent in proposing amendments. The Conservatives wished to allow landlords the right to apply to the land courts to have rents fixed, rather than leaving that privilege in the hands of tenants alone.<sup>23</sup> They also sought to strengthen the landlord's right of pre-emptive purchase of tenant-right;<sup>24</sup> to permit the land courts to fix the value of tenant-right, and to prevent public auction of the same.<sup>25</sup> The Ulster Liberals, whose criticisms of the Bill were remarkably similar to those of the Nationalists, moved amendments to lengthen the period for which rents were to be fixed from 15 to 31 years,<sup>26</sup> and to allow a tenant the right to sell his interest to more than one purchaser, forcing the



landlord to accept sub-division.<sup>27</sup> Finally, they sought to allow the land courts to make allowances for previous 'rack-renting' when setting a fair rent.<sup>28</sup> Only the first of these amendments was accepted by the government, but the question of arrears was settled the following August after considerable lobbying from both the Nationalists and the Ulster Liberals<sup>29</sup> by the Arrears of Rent (Ireland) Act, (1882),<sup>30</sup> which was opposed, in Ulster, by only Castlereagh and Cole. (Appendix 2)

In two respects, the Ulster Liberals and Conservatives were in complete agreement. First, they felt that the composition of the Land Courts, as envisaged would, in the words of Richardson, "hardly command the confidence of the farmers". There was a need, he felt, "for a well-considered amendment that would tend to popularise them".<sup>31</sup> "I had hoped", commented Macnaghten, "for a tribunal that would be cheap, expeditious and accessible to all. One that would have commanded universal respect." For this reason he sought "to have associated with the Judge two practical persons selected for their superior knowledge of the land who should visit the holdings and determine all matters of fact but not of law".<sup>32</sup> Second, both parties in Ulster felt that the provisions to attain peasant proprietary were too weak. Lewis felt that "the government might have been more liberal in their advances for purchase",<sup>33</sup> while Richardson, far in advance of the government, saw "the clauses relating to the question of peasant proprietary as the only final solution to the Irish difficulty"<sup>34</sup> and Kinnear hoped that "the government would be induced to grant the



whole of the purchase money for the extension ... of the great principles of peasant proprietorship".<sup>35</sup>

After thirty-three nights in the committee stage the Land Bill was read for the third time, passed, and sent to the Lords on July 29. In the final division no Ulster member voted against it. (Appendix 2) Salisbury, who had previously labelled the Bill "a violent innovation prompted by a temporary passion",<sup>36</sup> was prevailed upon by Northcote and others to allow it to pass without significant amendment. This he did, though without good grace,<sup>37</sup> and after the Lords had considered the Bill twice, it having been returned once from the Commons with objections to some of the proposed amendments, it finally became law on August 22.

Thus it is clear that while the Ulster Liberals played an important part in persuading Gladstone to adopt a strong Land Bill, the Conservatives played a crucial role in securing the passage of the Bill through both Houses of Parliament. By supporting Gladstone, and by encouraging their party colleagues to be more fearful of the rejection of the Bill than of its wider implications for private property in land, the Ulster Conservatives seem to have been fundamentally responsible for preventing its emasculation. In a letter to Gibson, written one week after the Bill had become law, Northcote upheld this observation:

Of course, if the Irish landlords, and especially the Ulster members, had taken a decided line against the Bill, we could have stopped it or cut it

down to nothing by action in the two Houses. But this was impossible in the face of their determination to pass the measure.<sup>38</sup>

#### IV

The Land Act was well received throughout Ulster. The Impartial Reporter saw it as a "masterly solution",<sup>39</sup> while the Belfast News-Letter remained "confident that Ulster will not give very much employment to the land court, and that as regards most of the large properties little or no change will be perceptible".<sup>40</sup> Ironically, the Act had a more pronounced influence in Ulster than in the southern provinces. The proportion of tenants who applied to the land courts to have fair share rents determined - 16% in the first year - was similar to the 16.2% of tenants in Connaught, but much more respectively than the 11.2% and 6.3% of tenants in Munster and Leinster.<sup>41</sup> The average 22.6% reduction in rent granted by the courts to applicants in Ulster was fully 3% greater than the average reduction in the other provinces.<sup>42</sup>

While the Act rang the death knell of the Land League in Ulster, it was not received by northern tenants entirely without criticism. In a memorial submitted to Gladstone by the Ulster Tenant Farmers' Association in November 1882, it was lambasted for precisely the reasons previously outlined <sup>by</sup> ~~in~~ the province's political representatives during the debates of July 1881: The inadequacy of facilities for allowing tenants to purchase their farms and the poor and often unjust

working, as the tenant farmers would have it, of the land courts.

"We are assured", the tenants' representatives warned Gladstone, "you will approve of the determination of Irish tenant farmers to guard with vigilance and tenacity, rights acquired after so many years of suffering and loss ... They are today found firmly resolved to press on until the great work of their emancipation is perfected and completed."<sup>43</sup>

## CONCLUSION

From this study it is clear that the course of the Land War in Ulster during 1880-1 was fundamentally similar to that which it took in the other provinces of Ireland. Ulster tenant farmers did not fare better than their southern peers during the agricultural depression which began in the 1870s. Moreover, their standard of living declined more dramatically as a consequence of the dual impact of the fall in produce prices, and the increased burden of rent and restriction on the realization value of tenant-right that was imposed upon them during the course of the decade. The Ulster tenant custom - the basis of the traditionally greater prosperity of northern tenants - had, by this time, been seriously undermined by the spread of the cash economy and by the incidence of landlords taking advantage of legislation enacted since 1849 to enhance their incomes. The net result of these developments was that the status of the Ulster tenantry was reduced and became more comparable to that of the tenantry in the south. This had the effect of universalizing the demand for land reform in Ireland during the period.

Yet the Land League did not make headway in Ulster until fully six months after it had become established in the south. The essential reason for this was the continued loyalty of the northern tenantry to their political representatives. The adoption by the Liberals of the tenant-right platform during the 1870s, the progressive stance of the Conservatives on the issue at the election of 1880, and the

establishment of a Liberal government in the same year all encouraged the northern tenantry to believe in the imminence of land reform. Only when it became clear that radical reform was not an early priority of the government and that the Conservatives in both Houses might defeat such legislation did the Ulster tenantry begin to desert their traditional social and political leaders and join the Land League. There is no evidence to suggest, once they had begun to do so, that sectarian divisions in the province hampered the course of the agitation, and it is clear that traditional patterns of deference broke down in precisely the same ways as occurred in the south.

Anti-Land League sentiment in the north was not synonymous with intransigence on the issue of land reform. Though implacably opposed to the League, landlords, the press, the Orange Order and the Ulster Conservatives were all disposed to a measure of reform. The Land League's most important achievement in the north was to attract sufficient Protestant support to cause these groups to fear that if they did not move toward advocating the 'three Fs' as a basis for reform they would lose all vestiges of their traditional social and political sway over the disaffected Protestant tenantry.

At Westminster, the Ulster members had an influence which was out of all proportion to their numbers. The Liberals clearly played an important role in securing Gladstone's conversion to the platform of the 'three Fs' and, while their objectives and their efforts to amend the deficiencies in the Land Bill were virtually identical to those of the

Parnellites, they have generally been ignored by historians. The Ulster Conservatives, far from playing a negative role, seem to have been fundamentally responsible for the safe passage of the Land Bill into law. By taking the stance they did, both parties violated not only the prevailing philosophy of laissez-faire, but also certain cherished ideals of their parent parties. Thus, the Ulster Liberals' desire for the widespread establishment of peasant proprietary confronted the deep-seated liberal prejudice against public expenditure, while the Conservatives' support for the Land Bill was at variance with the notions of the sanctity of private property and freedom of contract which were so important to the party on the mainland: Their actions in 1881 abruptly began the process of their divorce from the mainstream of Conservative politics.

Thus there is an abundance of evidence to justify the rewriting of the first episode of the Land War from a less nationalist and more wholly Irish perspective. The frequently sentimental approach of Irish historians to Parnell and the Land League, and the events of 1885-6 which saw the complete extirpation of liberalism in the province and the resurgence of sectarian politics, should not be allowed to obscure this brief episode in Ulster's all-too-frequently reactionary political history when the province was at the forefront of reform.

## ENDNOTES

### INTRODUCTION

1. Other leading lights of the Land League and the Nationalist party published their memoirs in later years. See T.M. Healy, Letters and Leaders of my Day, (New York, 1929). W. O'Brien, Recollections, (London, 1905) and An Olive Branch in Ireland, (London, 1910). No such sources are available for any of the leading English or Irish Liberal and Conservative politicians.
2. N.D. Palmer, The Irish Land League Crisis, (New Haven, 1940). J.E. Pomfret, The Struggle for Land in Ireland, 1800-1923 (Princeton, 1930).
3. J. Lee, The Modernisation of Irish Society, 1848-1918, (Dublin, 1973). A. O'Day, The English Face of Irish Nationalism, Parnellite Involvement in British Politics, 1880-86, (Dublin, 1977).
4. P. Bew, Land and the National Question in Ireland, 1858-82, (Dublin, 1978). S. Clark, 'The Social Composition of the Land League', Irish Historical Studies, vol. 17, no. 56 (September 1965) pp. 447-69.
5. T.W. Moody, Davitt and Irish Revolution, 1846-82, (Oxford 1981). B. Solow, The Land Question and the Irish Economy, 1870-1903 (Harvard, 1971).
6. O'Day, op.cit., pp.97-8. See also Pomfret, op. cit., pp. 160-1.
7. M. Davitt, The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland, (Dublin, 1904) p.22.
8. B.M. Walker, 'The Land Question and Elections in Ulster, 1868-86', in S. Clark and J. Donnelly (eds), Irish Peasants: Violence and Political Unrest, 1780-1914 (Manchester, 1983), pp.230-270.
9. R.W. Kirkpatrick, 'Origins and Development of the Land War in Mid-Ulster, 1879-85', in F.S.L. Lyons and R.A.J. Hawkins (eds), Ireland Under the Union, (Oxford, 1980), pp.201-235.
10. F. Thomson, 'Attitudes to Reform: Political Parties in Ulster and the Irish Land Bill of 1881', Irish Historical Studies, vol. 24, No. 95 (May 1985) pp.327-340.



CHAPTER ONE  
THE ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

1. In 1870, 82% of tenants in Ulster held their farms on the bases of tenancy from year to year and at will. The figures for Leinster, Munster and Connaught were 72%, 64% and 87% respectively. B.P.P. Returns Showing the Number of Agricultural Holdings in Ireland and the Tenure by which they are held by the Occupiers, (1870) p.757.
2. Information on rents in Ulster may be found in Kirkpatrick, loc. cit., p.201 and W.E. Vaughan, 'Landlord and Tenant Relations in Ireland Between the Famine and the Land War', 1850-78', in L.M. Cullen and T.C. Smout (eds), Comparative Aspects of Scottish and Irish Economic and Social History, 1600-1900, (Edinburgh, 1977) p.217. One contemporary estimated the average rent per acre in Ulster in 1880 to be 11s 2d. His figures for Leinster, Munster and Connaught were 18s 11d, 15s 8d and 6s 9d respectively. The variations in these figures are similar to those of Griffith's Valuation and reflect the quality of land in each province. F. Dun, Landlords and Tenants in Ireland, (London, 1881), p.252.
3. B.P.P. Agricultural Statistics of Ireland: Abstract showing the Acreage under Crops, also the Number and Description of Livestock in each County and Province in 1879 (1880) p.952. Ibid. Preliminary Report on the Returns of Agricultural Produce in Ireland in 1879. (1880) pp.829, 865.
4. Ibid. p.869.
5. Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland, Ireland: Industrial and Agricultural (Dublin, 1902) pp.308, 312, 318.
6. B.P.P. Agricultural Statistics of Ireland: The Number of Holdings in Each Province in 1841 ... and 1879, according to the Classifications used by the Census Commissioners, (1880) p.824.
7. Ibid. Abstract Showing the Acreage Under Each Crop, also the Number and Description of Livestock in Each County in 1860. (1861) p.361. For 1878, (1878) p.594. The average number of cattle per farm in Ulster in 1878 was 5.31. The figures for Leinster, Munster and Connaught were 7.6, 9.64 and 4.3 respectively.
8. Ibid. (1856) p.294. For 1878, (1878) p.594.



9. Vaughan, loc. cit. pp. 216-17. Information on farm incomes and rural living standards may be found in L.M. Cullen, An Economic History of Ireland Since 1660, (London, 1972) pp. 134-170.
10. Ibid. p217.
11. K.T. Hoppen, Elections, Politics and Society in Ireland, 1832-1885, (Oxford, 1984) p.113.
12. B.P.P. Agricultural Statistics for Ireland: Extent of Principal Crops, Average Produce per Statute Acre, and Estimated Produce ... 1871-9 Inclusive ... With Their Value, (1880) p.899.
13. Ibid. Average Rates of Produce to the Statute Acre in 1879, (1880) p.931.
14. Ibid. Counties grouped according to Similarity in the Estimated Average Produce of Potatoes per Statute Acre in 1879, (1880) p.900.
15. 'Extent of Principal Crops ... With Their Value', loc. cit., (1880) p.899. See also B.L. Solow, op. cit., pp.89-120.
16. Kirkpatrick, loc. cit., p.214.
17. Royal Commission on the Depressed Condition of Agricultural Interests, (Ireland) Preliminary Report, (1881), XVI, p.843.
18. The Impartial Reporter and Fermanagh Farmer's Journal, September 11, 1879.  
The Ulster Gazette, October 27. The local press reported abatements of rent in full.
19. In the three years 1879-81 there was a net total, after readmissions, of 6,212 evictions in Ulster, a rate of 30.6 per 1,000 farm families. The figures for Leinster, Munster and Connaught were 1,379 (10.8), 1,665 (13.5) and 1,400 (10.5) respectively. Source: B.P.P. Return of Cases of Eviction which have come to the Knowledge of the Constabulary in the Years 1849-1880 Inclusive, (1881) p.275; for 1881, (1882) p.1.
20. Solow, op. cit., p.22. This belief was widely held by contemporaries. See, for example, the comments of W.E. Forster and Sir Hugh Law, the Attorney General for Ireland. 3 Hansard, CCLIII, p.846, (June 25, 1880) and pp. 1161-2 (June 29).
21. Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Working of the Landlord and Tenant (Ireland) Act, 1870. (Bessborough Commission) Minutes of Evidence, (1881) XVIII-XIX.
22. Ibid. XIX, p.2.

23. Cullen, op. cit., pp. 137-8.
24. Dun, op. cit., p.101.
25. Ibid. p.99.
26. W.B. Jones, The Life's Work in Ireland of a Landlord Who Tried to do his Duty, (London, 1880) pp.169, 175.
27. Bessborough Commission, XIX, p.3.
28. Ibid. p.28
29. Sir Henry Hervey Bruce, Conservative M.P. for Coleraine, 3 Hansard, CCLX, pp. 1876-9 (May 5, 1881).
30. Ibid. pp.1104-5, (April 25).
31. Bessborough Commission, XIX, p.3.
32. Ibid. p.6. Thomas Dickson, Liberal M.P. for county Tyrone held that "The Encumbered Estates Court simply handed over the tenants' interests and improvements to the mercy of the land speculator, thereby [laying] the foundation for thirty years of agrarian crime and agitation". 'An Irish Policy for a Liberal Government', (London, 1885) p.10.
33. Bessborough Commission, XIX, p.8. This view was shared by the signatories of both the majority and minority of reports of the Richmond Commission. Preliminary Report of Her Majesty's Commission of Agriculture (January 14, 1881), (1881), LXV, pp.7, 20. The Act of 1870 was a product of official initiative. Its essence was to provide 'compensation for disturbance' in the event of eviction in all cases where the tenant was not more than six months (extended to 12 in 1877) in arrears with rent. As such it aimed to extend a measure of the benefit of tenant-right enjoyed by northern farmers to those in the rest of the land. The other major innovation of the Act were the 'Bright' clauses (after John Bright) by which the state undertook to lend tenants who wished to purchase their farms two-thirds of the cost, repaying the debt by 5% annuities spread over 35 years. These terms were so unfavorable that only 702 tenants, chiefly in Ulster, purchased their farms in this way.
34. Ibid. p.10.
35. Ibid. p.7.
36. Ibid. p.8.

37. Landlords generally ploughed back circa 3-5% of their rental incomes throughout the period. O'Grada, 'The Investment Behaviour of Irish Landlords, 1850-75', Agricultural History Review, vol. 23, Part 2, (1975) p.153.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LAND, POLITICS AND THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 1880

1. I. Budge and C. O'Leary, Belfast: Approach to Crisis. A Study of Belfast Politics, 1613-1970 (London, 1973) pp. 101-2. See also E.R. Green, 'Business Organisation and the Business Class' in J.C. Beckett and T.W. Moody (eds), Ulster since 1800: A Social Survey, (London, 1957) pp. 110-18 and R.B. McDowell, 'The Landed Classes and the Professions', Ibid. pp.99-109.
2. K.T. Hoppen, 'Landlords, Society and Politics in mid-Nineteenth Century Ireland', Past and Present, LXXV (May 1977) p.68.
3. Ibid. pp.67-9. In 1870 some 43.3% of the land mass of Ulster was concentrated in estates of greater than 10,000 acres. The proportions for Leinster, Munster and Connaught were 23.8%, 29.1% and 39% respectively. K.T. Hoppen, Elections, Politics and Society in Ireland, 1832-85 (Oxford, 1984) p.107.
4. E.D. Steele, Irish Land and British Politics, Tenant-Right and Nationality, 1865-70. (Cambridge, 1974), pp.22, 29.
5. Hoppen, 'Landlords and Society', loc. cit., p.70.
6. Steele, op. cit., p.25. See also J. Mogeey, 'Social Relations in Rural Society', in Beckett and Moody, op. cit., pp.73-4.
7. Hoppen, 'Landlords and Society', loc. cit., p.82.
8. B.M. Walker (ed), Parliamentary Election Results in Ireland, 1802-1922 (Dublin, 1978), pp.XII-XIII.
9. B.M. Walker, 'The Land Question and Elections in Ulster, 1868-86', in S. Clark and J. Donnelly (eds), Irish Peasants: Violence and Political Unrest, 1780-1914, (Manchester, 1983) p.231.
10. Ibid. p.232.
11. See M. Hurst, 'Ireland and the Ballot Act, 1872', in A. O'Day (ed), Reactions to Irish Nationalism, 1865-1914 (London, 1987), pp.33-59.
12. A. O'Day, The English Face of Irish Nationalism, Parnellite Involvement in British Politics, 1880-6, (Dublin, 1977) p.52. See also Walker, loc. cit., p.246.

13. Biggar was the originator of the 'obstructionist' tactics used by radical Home Rulers at Westminster and was one of Parnell's mentors. Fay, by contrast, was affiliated to the moderate, Buttite section of the party. It is interesting to note that Fay out-pollled Biggar in both the election of 1874 and in that of 1880.
14. Hoppen, 'Elections, Politics and Society', op. cit. p.271. Only two Nationalists contested the election of 1874 in Ulster. In 1880 this rose to three.
15. The harvests of 1871-3 were as bad as those of 1877-9. Unlike in the latter period, however, reduced crop yields were not accompanied by falling produce prices which instead rose as a result of the deficiency. See B.P.P. Agricultural Statistics of Ireland: Tables of Estimated Produce of Crops, 1871 (1872) p.627. For 1872, (1873) p.727; for 1873 (1874) p.555.
16. The tenant-right movement had previously enjoyed a short existence in 1851-2. For a brief account of its progress in Ulster during the 1870s see R.W. Kirkpatrick, 'Origins and Development of the Land War in mid-Ulster', in F.S.L. Lyons and R.A.J. Hawkins (eds), Ireland under the Union, (Oxford, 1980) pp.202-3, 226 and K.T. Hoppen, 'Landlords and Society', loc. cit. pp.64-5.
17. Ibid. p.227.
18. J.E. Promfret, The Struggle for Land in Ireland, 1800-1923, (Princeton, 1930) p.64. See also A.R. Dinnen, 'Ulster Tenant-Right: Mr James Sharman Crawford's Amendment Bill and "No Surrender"', (Belfast, 1876). The parallel between Sharman Crawford and Parnell, both Protestant landlords and champions of tenant-right, should not be missed. The loss of Sharman Crawford's seat to Castlereagh after the former's death in 1875 is a good example of how the tenant vote could be attracted by popular Conservative landlords.
19. Interestingly Dinnen, a Liberal, included Isaac Butt in the appendix of 'Staunch friends of the tenant-right cause' attached to his pamphlet concerning Sharman Crawford's Land Bill. op. cit. p.11.
20. Ibid. p.8. See also Walker, loc. cit., p.244.
21. One of the earliest and the most enthusiastic advocates of peasant proprietary was Sir Henry Hervey Bruce. In 1870 he wrote to Gladstone urging the extension of the 'Bright Clauses' of the Land Bill which made some provision for the funding of the transfer of ownership of land to tenants (See above p.68). Bruce to Gladstone, 4 March, 1870. B.M.L. Gladstone papers, Add. Mss 44425 ff. 179-80. Bruce was one of the few Ulster

landlords to sell parts of their estates to tenants under the auspices of the 'Bright Clauses' during the 1870s. Government records show that he sold about twenty farms to tenants in 1873-5 and that his rents, which averaged above 20% about Griffith's valuation, were moderate. See B.P.P. Return of All Holdings Purchased by Tenants in the Landed Estates Court since the Passing of the Land Act of 1870. (1881) p.915. Early Liberal advocates of peasant proprietary included Dinnen, op. cit., p.8.

22. Ulster Gazette, February 28, 1880.
23. Impartial Reporter, March 11.
24. See J.L. Hammond, Gladstone and the Irish Nation, (London, 1938) p. 165.
25. Accounts of the Parnellites' election campaign in 1880 can be found in M. Davitt, The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland, (London, 1904) pp. 234-9 and C. Cruise O'Brien, Parnell and his Party, (Oxford, 1964) pp.12-44.
26. Impartial Reporter, March 11, 18. The Northern Whig, March 12-20.
27. The Cavan Weekly News, March 25.
28. The Belfast News-letter, March 12-22, Ulster Gazette, March 12, 19.
29. Ibid. March 12. Impartial Reporter, March 25.
30. Northern Whig, April 20.
31. Ulster Gazette, March 12. One of the best sources of information on the impact of the land issue on rural Orangeism is the Impartial Reporter which purported to serve 'Orange tenantry of Fermanagh'. For a further consideration of the impact of the land question of the Orange Order see below (pp.38-40).
32. Information concerning the election is taken from F. Goodlake, The New House of Commons, (London, 1880).
33. Impartial Reporter, April 15. Edward Verner lost his seat to Maxwell Close.
34. O'Brien, op. cit. pp.12-32.
35. Walker, loc. cit. p.245. See also Green and McDowell, loc. cit.



36. B.M.L. Gladstone Papers, Add. Mss 44463 ff. 167-8 (April 23, 1880).
37. The Liberals also wrested seats from Conservatives in Protestant Armagh and Tyrone.
38. F. Dun, Landlords and Tenants in Ireland, (London, 1881) p.101. Finlay Dun held the post of Times Commissioner in Ireland during the period. His position enabled him to meet with many important landlords and his book is a valuable insight into the practices and finances of landlords throughout Ireland. Contrary to contemporary etiquette, he made a point of naming bad landlords.
39. Impartial Reporter, September 11, 1879.
40. Kirkpatrick, loc. cit., p.217.
41. Castlereagh did not succeed to the title of Lord Londonderry until 1884.
42. See S. Clark, 'The Social Composition of the Land League', Irish Historical Studies, Vol. 17 no. 56 (September 1965), pp.447-69 and T. Nelson, 'The Land League in County Kildare', Journal of the Irish History Students' Association, Vol 1, No 1 (1981), pp.1-8.
43. P. Bew and F. Wright, 'The Agrarian Opposition in Ulster Politics, 1848-87', in S. Clark and J. Donnelly, op. cit., p.194.



### CHAPTER THREE

#### POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS AND THE LAND LEAGUE IN ULSTER, APRIL 1880 TO JANUARY 1881

1. 3 Hansard, CCLII, p.67 (May 20). The outgoing Conservative administration had enacted a Seed Supply Act and a Relief of Distress Act, the essence of which was the provision of loans for public works.
2. Ibid., pp.292-3.
3. Impartial Reporter, May 26.
4. T. Wemyss Reid, The Life of the Right Honourable W.E. Forster, (London, 1888) Vol 2, p.243.
5. B.P.P. Compensation for Disturbance (Ireland) Bill, 1880. (1880) p.427.
6. Cabinet Minutes, June 17-19, in H.C.G. Matthew (ed), The Gladstone Diaries, (Oxford, 1986) Vol IX, pp.538-43.
7. 3 Hansard, CCLIII, p.846 (June 25). W.B. Jones noted that "Tenant-right is liked by landlords and agents because it greatly lessens their trouble in collecting rents and getting rid of bad tenants ... the rent is always safe, and a broken tenant goes out with much less trouble when he is to receive a lot of money on doing so." op. cit., p.177.
8. Ibid., pp.1680-1 (July 5).
9. Ibid., CCLIV, p.883 (July 19).
10. Biggar was ejected from the chamber on July 9 for saying that "he did not think the tenant farmer unjustified in using physical force to the extent that was used against Lord Leitrim" (namely murder). Ibid., p.89. He was also ejected during the debate on the Protection of Persons and Property Bill the following February.
11. Edward Falconer Litton, M.P. for county Tyrone. Ibid., pp.838-9 (July 12).
12. Hammond, op. cit., p.178.
13. Ibid., p.178.
14. Ibid., p.178. See also A. O'Day, The English Face of Irish Nationalism, Parnellite Involvement in British Politics, 1880-86. (Dublin, 1977), p.96.

15. Impartial Reporter, August 26.
16. Kirkpatrick, 'Origins and Development of the Land War in Mid-Ulster', in F.S.L. Lyons and R.A.J. Hawkins (eds), Irish Peasants: Violence and Political Unrest, 1780-1914. (Manchester, 1983), p.230. This study provides a comprehensive account of the growth and activity of the Land League in Ulster.
17. Belfast News-Letter, December 23.
18. Ulster Gazette, December 11; Impartial Reporter, December 23.
19. Belfast News-Letter, December 23.
20. Impartial Reporter, December 23.
21. B.P.P. Return of Agrarian Offences in Each County in Each Month of 1880. (1881) p.619.
22. B.P.P. Return of Cases of Eviction which have come to the Knowledge of the Constabulary in each Quarter of 1880, showing number of Families evicted in each County in Ireland during each Quarter, and number readmitted as Tenants and as Caretakers. (1881) p.713.
23. Impartial Reporter, December 23.
24. B.P.P. Return of ... Ejectment Decrees granted throughout Ireland at the Michaelmas Sessions. 1880, (1881), p.805.
25. B.P.P. 'Return of Cases of Eviction ... Readmitted as Tenants and as Caretakers', loc. cit., p.713.
26. Ulster Gazette, November 6, 1880. Kirkpatrick, loc. cit., pp. 229-30. Moody, Davitt and Irish Revolution, (Oxford, 1981), pp. 433-4, 448.
27. Kirkpatrick, loc. cit., p.230. P. Bew, Land and the National Question in Ireland, 1858-82. (Dublin, 1978), p.218.
28. Ulster Gazette, January 8, 1881.
29. Ibid., February 12.
30. Ibid., March 12.
31. Ibid., November 6, 1880, December 25.
32. Ibid., December 25.
33. Ibid., March 26, 1881.

34. Kirkpatrick, loc. cit., p.226.
35. Ulster Gazette, February 12.
36. 'Lord Erne and his Lough Mask Tenantry', (Dublin, 1880). This tract, published by Crichton, contains a collection of correspondence between himself, Boycott and his tenantry.
37. Ulster Gazette, November 6, 1880. For Davitt's lurid account of the expedition see The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland (Dublin, 1904), pp. 276-7.
38. B.M.L. Gladstone Papers, Add. Mss 44157 f. 216.
39. N.D. Palmer, The Irish Land league Crisis, (New Haven, 1940), p.228.
40. Ibid., p.230.
41. Ulster Gazette, June 18, 1881.
42. Impartial Reporter, November 27, 1879.
43. Kirkpatrick, loc. cit., p.226.
44. Moody, op. cit., pp. 447-8.
45. Impartial Reporter, January 27, 1881.

#### CHAPTER FOUR

##### REORIENTATIONS: CONSERVATIVES, LIBERALS AND THE 'THREE Fs'

1. Belfast News-Letter, December 15, 1880.
2. Ibid., January 1, 1881.
3. 3 Hansard, CCLX, p. 894 (April 7).
4. Ibid., CCLXI, P. 1378 (May 26).
5. Ibid., CCLX, pp. 1162, 1167 (April 25).
6. Coleraine Constitution and Northern Counties Advertiser, August 20.
7. See below pp. 60-61.
8. 'Report of the Proceedings at the Great Aggregate Meeting of the Irish Landlords held in Dublin on Tuesday January 3, 1882', (Dublin, 1882), pp. 2-3.
9. J.L. Hammond, Gladstone and the Irish Nation, (London, 1938), p.188.
10. T. Wemyss Reid, The Life of the Right Honourable W.E. Forster, Two Volumes, (London, 1888), p. 243.
11. Gladstone to Forster, May 8 1880. B.M.L. Gladstone Papers, Add. Mss 44157 ff. 126-7. See also Cabinet Minutes, May 14, 'Amendment by extension of the Bright Clauses too complex for this year.' in H.C.G. Matthew (ed) The Gladstone Diaries, (Oxford, 1986), Vol IX, p.523.
12. Hammond, op. cit., pp.204-6.
13. Forster to Gladstone, 25 October, 1880. B.M.L. Gladstone Papers, Add. Mss 44157 f. 186.
14. Gladstone to Forster, November 7, 1880, Ibid., Add Mss 44157 f.211.
15. Gladstone to Forster, December 3, 1880. Ibid., Add Mss 44158 f.15.
16. F. Dun, Landlords and Tenants in Ireland, (London, 1881).
17. Gladstone to Forster, December 4, 1880. B.M.L. Gladstone Papers, Add. Mss 44158 f.17.

18. Ulster Liberal M.Ps. Memorial to Forster, December 1, 1880.  
Ibid., Add. Mss 44158 ff.7-8.
19. Gladstone to Forster, December 9, 1880. Ibid., Add. Mss 44158,  
f.64.
20. Forster to Gladstone, January 10, 1881, Ibid., Add. Mss 44158,  
ff.121-2.
21. Bessborough Commission, XVII, p.19.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### TOWARD A SETTLEMENT: THE LAND ACT OF 1881

1. Queen's speech, 3 Hansard, CCLVII, p.231-3 (January 7).
2. See, for example, the speeches of Mulholland, ibid., pp.739-40 (January 14) and Lewis, ibid., p.1756 (January 31).
3. Ibid., pp.394, 396 (January 10).
4. Ibid., pp.400-1 (January 10).
5. Ibid., p.1408 (January 25).
6. F. Thomson, 'Attitudes to Reform: Political Parties in Ulster and the Irish Land Bill of 1881'. Irish Historical Studies, Vol 24, No 95 (May, 1985), p.336.
7. Preliminary Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners on Agriculture, (1881), LXV, pp.1-24.
8. See, for example, the speeches of Ewart, 3 Hansard, CCLVIII, pp.211-12 (February 4) and Macnaghten, ibid., p.319 (February 7).
9. Ibid., CCLX, p.890 (April 7).
10. See, for example, the comments of Macnaghten, ibid., p.1109, (April 25) and of Givan, ibid., p.934 (April 25).
11. Land Law (Ireland) Bill, 1881, B.P.P. (1881), 111, p.7.
12. 3 Hansard, CCLX, p.930 (April 7).
13. Ibid., CCLXI, p.1386 (May 25).
14. Ibid., CCLX, pp.1876-7 (May 5)
15. Ibid., CCLXI, p324 (May 12).
16. Ibid., p.877 (May 19).
17. 3 Hansard, CCLX, p.1088 (April 25).
18. Ibid., CCLXI, P859 (May 19).
19. Ibid., CCLX, p.1373 (April 29).
20. See Thomson, loc. cit., pp.338-9.

21. Gorst to W.H. Smith, July 14, 1881, quoted in Thomson, ibid., p.340.
22. A. O'Day, The English Face of Irish Nationalism, Parnellite Involvement in British Politics, 1880-86. (Dublin, 1977). p.97.
23. McCartney, 3 Hansard, CCLXII, pp.1146-7 (July 1).
24. Wallace, ibid., p.485 (June 14).
25. Macnaghten, ibid., pp.364-5 (June 13).
26. Litton, ibid., pp.888-9 (June 24).
27. Givan, ibid., p.1135 (July 1).
28. Givan, ibid., p.669 (June 16). The amendments proposed by Litton and Givan were all lent support by Biggar.
29. See Dickson to Gladstone, March 30, 1882. B.M.L. Gladstone Papers, Add Mss 44474 ff.351-2 and ibid., 22 April 1882, Add. Mss 44475 ff.51-2.
30. Arrears of Rent (Ireland) Act, 1882. B.P.P. (1882) 1, p.155. Under the auspices of this Act, which was Gladstone's side of the 'Kilmainham Treaty', the government indemnified indebted tenants on a one-off basis.
31. 3 Hansard, CCLX, p.1106 (April 26).
32. Ibid., CCLXI, pp306, 327 (May 12).
33. Ibid., CCLX, pp.932-3 (April 25).
34. Ibid., p.1105 (April 26).
35. Ibid., CCLXI, p.628 (May 16).
36. J.L. Hammond, Gladstone and the Irish Nation, (London, 1938), p.216.
37. R.B. Douglas, Land, People and Politics: A History of the Land Question in the United Kingdom, 1878-1952. (London, 1976), p.32.
38. Northcote to Gibson, August 29, 1881. In Thomson, loc. cit., p.340.
39. Impartial Reporter, August 25.
40. Belfast News-Letter, August 18.



41. First Annual Report of the Irish Land Commissioners, 22 August, 1881 to 22 August, 1882. (1882), XX, p.274.
42. Ibid., p.276. The mean reduction in rent in Leinster was 18%; in Munster 20.5% and in Connaught 20.7%.
43. B.P.P. Ulster Tenant Farmers' Association Memorial to the First Lord of the Treasury, with reference to the Administration of the Land Law (Ireland) Act, 1881. (1882), p.475. In their report the Land Commissioners commented 'Some work has been accomplished under the purchase clauses of the Act, but not as much as expected'. Ibid., p.270. The purchase clauses of the Land Act of 1881 allowed tenants to borrow three-fourths of the cost of their farms from the government. Only 731 tenants bought their farms in this way. Hammond op. cit., p.230.

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1870	(1871) LXIX,	p.655	1877 (1878) LXXVII,	p.511
1871	(1872) LXIII,	p.627	1878 (1878-9) LXXV,	p.587
1873	(1874) LXIX,	p.555	1879 (1880) LXXXVI,	p.815
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# APPENDIX ONE

## RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS IN ULSTER BY COUNTIES, 1881 (%)

	Roman Catholics	Church of Ireland	Presbyterians	Others
Antrim	22.7	19.8	51.3	6.2
Armagh	46.4	32.7	16.0	4.9
Cavan	80.9	14.7	3.4	1.0
Donegal	76.5	12.0	10.1	1.4
Down	30.9	22.8	40.0	6.3
Fermanagh	55.8	36.4	2.0	5.8
Londonderry	44.4	19.1	33.2	3.3
Monaghan	73.7	13.3	11.9	1.1
Tyrone	55.5	22.4	19.5	2.6
Ulster*	47.8	21.8	25.9	4.5

\* Including Towns..

Source: W.E. Vaughan and A.J. Fitzpatrick (ed), Irish Historical Statistics. Population, 1821-1971 (Dublin, 1978), pp.58-9.

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Antrim	22.7	19.8	51.3	6.2
Armagh	46.4	32.7	16.0	4.9
Cavan	80.9	14.7	3.4	1.0
Donegal	76.5	12.0	10.1	1.4
Down	30.9	22.8	40.0	6.3
Fermanagh	55.8	36.4	2.0	5.8
Londonderry	44.4	19.1	33.2	3.3
Monaghan	73.7	13.3	11.9	1.1
Tyrone	55.5	22.4	19.5	2.6
Ulster*	47.8	21.8	25.9	4.5

\* Including Towns.

Source: W.E. Vaughan and A.J. Fitzpatrick (ed), Irish Historical Statistics. Population, 1821-1971 (Dublin, 1978), pp.58-9.

### SELECTED VOTING RECORD OF ULSTER M.Ps., 1880-2

**Liberals\***

## Nationalists

## Conservatives

3rd Reading of the Compensation for Disturbance Bill (July 26, 1880)	3rd Reading of the Protec- tion of Persons and Property Bill (February 25, 1881)	2nd Reading of the Land Law (Ireland) Bill, (May 19, 1881)	3rd Reading of the Land Law (Ireland) Bill, (July 29, 1881)	2nd Reading of the Arrears of Rent (Ireland) Bill (May 23, 1832)
A	-	A	A	A
A	-	A	A	A
A	-	A	A	A
A	A	A	A	-
A	-	A	A	A
A	-	A	-	**
A	-	A	A	A
A	-	A	A	A
A				
A	N	-	-	A
A	-	A	A	-
N	A	A	A	-
N	-	A	-	-

APPENDIX TWO (continued)

Conservatives (cont'd)

		1	2	3	4	5
Bruce, Sir H. H.	Coleraine	N	-	-	-	-
Castelreagh, Viscount	co. Down	N	-	-	-	N
Chaine, J.	co. Antrim	N	-	A	-	-
Close, M.C.	co. Armagh	N	-	A	-	-
Cole, Viscount	Enniskillen	N	-	N	-	N
Corry, J.P.	Belfast	N	-	-	A	-
Crichton, Viscount	co. Fermanagh	N	A	-	-	-
Ewart, W.	Belfast	N	-	A	-	-
Greer, T.	Carrickfergus	N	A	A	-	-
Hill, Lord A.W.	co Down	N	-	A	-	-
Lewis, C.E.	Londonderry City	N	-	A	-	-
MaCartney, J.W.E.	co. Tyrone	N	A	A	-	-
Macnaghten, E.	co. Antrim	N	A	A	-	-
Mulholland, J.	Downpatrick	N	A	A	-	-
Thomson, H.	Newry	N	-	A	-	-
Wallace, Sir R.	Lisburn	N	-	A	-	-

\*T.A. Dickson, elected for Dungannon in 1880, was prevented from taking his seat due to a protracted dispute concerning the legitimacy of the poll. He eventually relinquished the seat, which was subsequently won by his son in a bye-election the following year, too late for the vote on the Land Bill.

\*\*E.F. Litton gave up his seat to become a land commissioner in 1881. T.A. Dickson won this seat in the bye-election of 1882, and both he and his son, R. A. Dickson, voted for the Arrears Bill.

Sources: 1. 3 Hansard, CCLIV, p. 1452. 2. B.P.P. Divisions, List 97, (1881), p.245. 3. 3 Hansard, CCLXI, p.928.  
4. Ibid., CCLXIV, p. 192. 5. Ibid., CCLXIX, p. 1445.

## VITA

Alan Stephen Hunt was born in January 1963, the son of Mr. and Mrs. P. A. Hunt of 'Beech House', Ainthorpe, Near Danby, North Yorkshire, England. He attended St Albans School on a county scholarship where he gained A-levels in English, French and History in 1981. Between 1982 and 1985 he studied history at the University of Kent at Canterbury where he was the recipient of a merit scholarship from the I.C.I. Educational Trust. He graduated in June 1985 with a B.A. (Hons) grade 2.1 and the following August took up an appointment as a teaching assistant at Lehigh University, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, where he studied for a Masters degree in History until December 1986.